

Seven Soviet Plays



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TORONTO

Seven Soviet Plays

FIELD MARSHAL KUTUZOV
by Vladimir Solovyov

THE ORCHARDS OF POLOVCHANSK
by Leonid Leonov

ON THE EVE
by Alexander Afinogenov

SMOKE OF THE FATHERLAND
by The Tur Brothers and L. Sheinin

ENGINEER SERGEYEV
by Vsevolod Rukk

THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE
by Konstantin Simonov

THE FRONT
by Alexander Korneichuk

With introductions by H. W. L. Dana

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INTRODUCTION

By

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW DANA

These seven different plays represent seven different ways in which Soviet drama prepared the Russian people for the coming of the German invasion of June, 1941, and helped sustain their courage and unity in the midst of that invasion—the most terrific of all history.

The first play selected for this volume, Solovyov's *Field Marshal Kutuzov*, is representative of the many plays dealing with past invasions of Russia and warning the people of the menace of future invasion. Acted in 1939, two years before the beginning of the Nazi attack, it presented Soviet audiences with a splendid panorama of the Napoleonic invasion of 1812 and a noble portrait of the patient, long-suffering Russian commander who believed that Russia, like a sponge, could absorb her enemy and then, when the right time came, squeeze him out. By being willing to sacrifice even Moscow, so that the Russian army, the Russian people, and Russia herself might be saved, Kutuzov set an example for later Russians to follow. As he put it: "He who is unwilling to sacrifice that which is smaller for the sake of that which is larger, can have small care for that which is larger." The use of the scorched-earth policy and of partisans fighting behind the enemy's lines, as shown in Solovyov's play, prepared the Russians who saw it in 1939 for the tactics they were to put into effect in 1941. The play, which continued to be acted at the Vakhtangov Theatre in Moscow until the building was completely demolished in a Nazi air raid in July, 1941, was then revived in innumerable other theatres throughout the Soviet Union. The Germans might destroy the theatre buildings, but they could not destroy Soviet drama. Other plays and films and cantatas strengthened the Russians' feeling of their unity and continuity with their past, going back across seven centuries and taking up the long series of earlier historical invasions of Russia and their earlier military heroes: Alexander Nevski was portrayed defeating the Teutonic Knights in the Battle on the Ice in 1242 and crying to the Germans: "Let them come to us as friends and they will be received as friends: but he who comes against us with a sword shall perish with the sword!" Dmitri Donskoi was shown dying in battle against the invaders in 1380 and shouting, "Better to die honorably than to live ignobly"; Minin, saying in 1612, "There is no such

power as can make us slaves!" and Pozharski, his fellow defender of Russia, saying, "We are in the right—let us fight to the death." Ivan Susanin was represented allowing himself to be tortured in 1613 rather than betray Russia; Peter the Great, driving out the invading army at Poltava in 1709; Army Leader Suvorov, crying out in 1800 as he died, "Suvorov will not die—Suvorov will live in every Russian soldier!" From Russian stages and screens, all these voices from the past thundered across the centuries to inspire a new generation to the defense of Russia. They carried out the words of Marshal Stalin, "May we be inspired in this war by the heroic images of our great forerunners!"

The second play printed in this collection, Leonov's *The Orchards of Polovchansk*, is a good example of the many plays depicting the healthy progress of the Soviet Union during the years before the German invasion. As acted at the Moscow Art Theatre in 1938, it recaptured much of the charm of the Chekhov plays that had been acted there. Here was the same delightful family gathering in a house near an orchard. Yet the contrast with *The Cherry Orchard* was also striking. For in place of frustration and futility, here was a new joy in communal achievement. In place of an orchard being sold and finally chopped down, here was an orchard belonging to the state and yielding each year more abundant and more magnificent fruit. Other Soviet dramatists also (Pogodin in *Tempo*, *The Poem of the Ax*, *My Friend*, and *The Silver Ravine*; Kataev in *Vanguard* and *Time Forward!* Glebov in *Growth and Power*; Gladkov in *Cement* and *Pride*) have dramatized the struggle of the Soviet Union for the collectivization of the farms and the industrialization of Russia, necessary precursors of a strong national defense. Their plays showed the fundamental health of the Soviet Union, which enabled it to put up the strong resistance which surprised so many onlookers. In *The Orchards of Polovchansk* and in several of these other plays there lurk in the background sinister figures leagued with the enemies of Russia, giving even to these cheerful plays the sense of the ever-present menace of a coming foreign invasion.

The next play in the collection, Afinogenov's *On the Eve*, was the first of a long series of war plays. The time of the first act is June 21, 1941—the eve of the German attack. It is the shortest night of the year, Midsummer night, and the tranquillity of the scene on the terrace by the river with the lights of Moscow in the distance, as the characters sit reciting poetry and singing softly, is like the calm before the storm. Those whose lives were absorbed in improving the varieties of grain (like the father in *The Orchards of Polovchansk*, wrapped up in his production of better types of apples) were men devoted to peaceful progress. On that same night in the city of Moscow, five theatres were saturating the Russian

audiences with the beauty of Shakespeare's poetry. The Red Army Theatre was showing Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. The serenity of the beautiful June evening was like that of the opening bars of Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony. Then suddenly came the harsh noise of the invading German panzer divisions—seeming inhumanly static even as they advanced. So in the second act of the play comes the war. But among the Russians there is a sudden unity—"as if a clean wind had scattered the husks of personal affairs," and "as if everything had become bigger and simpler." The old father cries: "We did not begin this war—but we will finish it." Another play, Karevin's *The House on the Hill*, begins similarly on the night before the attack with a family gathering—this time in a country house on a hill outside of Leningrad—interrupted by a voice over the radio announcing that German armies have invaded Russia. Other plays took up later stages of the siege of Moscow and the still more terrific siege of Leningrad—plays that served to mobilize the resolute spirit of resistance and to hammer out the spiritual instruments of victory.

In our next play, *Smoke of the Fatherland* by the two Tur brothers and Leo Sheinin, the invasion is well under way. With the advancing German armies is a former Russian landowner who hopes by the help of the Nazis to regain his former estates. In his enthusiasm he quotes from the famous old play by Griboedov, *Sorrows of the Spirit*, the lines beginning "Sweet and pleasant is the smoke of the fatherland." This gives the title to the play; but it has an ironic sense, for when the Russians carry out their scorched-earth policy the smoke of the fatherland proves not to be so sweet and pleasant in the nostrils of the invading landowner. Many other plays (Leonov's *Invasion*, Constantin Finn's *Ruza Forest* which has been adapted in English under the title *Secret Weapon*, Korneichuk's *Partisans on the Ukrainian Steppes*, to mention only a few of the best) deal similarly with the arrogance of the intruders and the heroic and patient courage of the partisans and the other Russians resisting the invasion.

In Rokk's *Engineer Sergeyev*, the next play included in this collection, the invading German armies have reached the banks of the river Dnieper; and the Russians reluctantly decide to blow up the Dnieprostroi Dam rather than have it and its hydroelectric station fall into the hands of the enemy. It is a symbol of the sacrifices which the Russian people were willing to make. Only those who know what a communal pride the people had felt in that great achievement when the dam was completed nine years earlier can understand how great a sacrifice it meant to them. They had learned, however, the lesson of Kutuzov—the willingness to sacrifice that which is smaller for that which is greater; and they destroyed the dam to save the Russian armies, the Russian people, Russia itself.

With Simonov's *The Russian People*, of which Clifford Odets's English version is given in this volume, we come to a war play in which the hero is no one individual, but the whole Russian people. In a town surrounded by the invading Germans everyone is pressed into service: a former chauffeur is made a captain, a poet is made head of the intelligence department, an old tsarist officer serves as chief of staff, a medical assistant goes to certain death with a song on his lips. Each one is prepared "to die for a purpose." Yet, tragic as is their lot, it is far happier than that of the miserable Nazi invaders or the still more miserable Russian traitor who is forced by his Nazi masters to rejoice that his own son, a Red Army Commander, has been killed.

Finally, in Korneichuk's *The Front*, we come to the most discussed of all the Russian war plays. The fact that, in the very midst of the war, a play which seemed to criticize some of the older members of the high command in the Red Army was acted everywhere and even printed in full in four consecutive numbers of the official Communist party newspaper *Pravda*, and that the author not only escaped reprimand but was given a high post in the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs indicates the very healthy state of self-criticism among the Russians—criticism freely permitted so long as it was made with the purpose, as in this case, of strengthening the Red Army. Some of the old fogies may have fumed, but methods were brought up to date and conditions were improved.

These seven plays all contributed, in their different ways, to the war effort. They have used various different techniques and have been acted in various ways—not merely in theatres but at the front, before the soldiers. For the Russians the theatre is a sort of second home, and when they are away from home they like to have this second home come to them. It brings the rear and the front together and promotes unity. Sometimes in the midst of a performance at the front, a Red Army commander has ordered the audience to adjourn for a time to deal with the enemy; then the audience has returned and the play has continued. On one occasion, German shells began falling on the platform where the actors were acting and the Russian commander ordered his gunners to silence the enemy's batteries, adding with a smile: "Don't let those Nazis interfere with the drama!"

Quite apart from their connection with the World War, these plays are important as characteristic examples of the best playwriting in modern Russia. Most of them represent what Soviet critics call "socialist realism," which differs from ordinary external photographic realism in being dynamic rather than static and in trying not merely to depict things as they are, but also to show the determining causes that made them what they are and to point out the directions in which they are developing.

In addition to these and earlier native plays arousing their patriotism, Russians are very fond of plays by their allies—English and American. It is this twofold loyalty—to their own country and to their allies—that partly explains the Russians' success in the war. A great Russian actor has said: "There is an old veteran fighting on our side in this war, a three-hundred-year-old veteran, and his name is William Shakespeare!" Over the portal of the Red Army Theatre are inscribed the words of Voroshilov: "Every Red Army man must learn to know and love the culture he is fighting to defend." That culture for the Red Army means not merely Pushkin and Tolstoi and Gorki and the Soviet writers, but also Shakespeare and the other great writers of the world.

During the war there was no blackout of the arts in the Soviet Union. An old proverb says: "When the guns begin to speak, the Muses must be silent." But in Russia drama was heard together with the guns. Each play, each film, was a blow struck at the enemy. Soviet drama was a force with which to mobilize the minds of men, and in wartime it proved to be a most powerful weapon in national defence.

As the Red Armies pushed the Germans back in this war of liberation, the actors followed closely; and often on the very night that followed the freeing of a town a play was put on. New and larger theatres are being constructed, where these war plays and new plays perhaps better than any of them will be acted, and all that is best in the plays of all the United Nations. What they have in common is the best of each. The Russians will want to do all they can to advance the union of the United Nations until all nations are united, all races are equal, and all men are free.

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FIELD MARSHAL KUTUZOV

A Play in Five Acts and Eleven Scenes

By VLADIMIR SOLOVYOV

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN INTO ENGLISH BLANK VERSE

By J. J. ROBBINS



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SOLOVYOV

Vladimir Alexandrovich Solovyov was born in 1907 in the small city of Sumi, between Kharkov and Kiev in the Ukraine. His father, an office worker, volunteered in the First World War. The son went to school in Petrograd, worked as an electrician in a factory to help support his mother, and wrote poetry for Soviet periodicals.

Solovyov's first play, We Are from Olonets, was staged in Leningrad in 1930 and dealt with the foundry workers in an iron-ore plant at Olonets, between Leningrad and the Finnish border. In Personal Life (1934) and The Human Smile (1937), plays in verse acted throughout the Soviet Union, he asserted powerfully the rights of the individual in a collectivist society. He next wrote in 1938 The Family Chronicle, in which a family of Stakhanovite workers discover to their horror that the oldest brother is in league with the enemies of Russia.

Sensing more and more the threat of an invasion, Solovyov then turned back to the Napoleonic invasion of 1812 and wrote his masterpiece, the monumental historical drama in verse Field Marshal Kutuzov which is printed here. It was produced in 1939 at the Vakhtangov Theatre in Moscow and won the Stalin Prize of 50,000 rubles; and it was still there in July, 1941, a month after the invasion began, when the theatre was completely demolished in a Nazi air raid. But the play was immediately continued in other theatres.

Like his father before him, Solovyov volunteered his services against the Germans; but he was summoned back to Moscow to convert his play into the film called Kutuzov in the Soviet Union, but 1812 as released in America.

Since then, Solovyov has turned to still earlier Russian history. In The Great Sovereign he has treated Ivan the Terrible as a powerful earlier defender of Russia. He has also written a vigorous translation of Rostand's Cyrano de Bergerac, and in A Citizen of Leningrad has dramatized the story of Shostakovich, heroically composing his Seventh Symphony in the midst of the terrific siege of Leningrad.

H. W. L. D.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

PRINCE MIKHAIL ILLARIONOVICH KUTUZOV, Russian Field Marshal

ALEXANDER I, Emperor of the Russias

MIKHAIL BOGDANOVICH BARCLAY DE TOLLY, Commander of the First Russian Army

PRINCE PYOTR IVANOVICH BAGRATION, Commander of the Second Russian Army

LEONTIY LEONTIEVICH BENNIGSEN, General of Cavalry

ALEKSEY PETROVICH YERMOLOV, General, Chief of Staff of the First Russian Army

BALASHEV, Minister of Police

VOLKONSKY	} Russian generals
RAYEVSKY	
KONOVNITZIN	

COLONEL TOLL, Quartermaster General

SIR ROBERT WILSON, English Military Attaché to the Russian Army

DENIS VASILIEVICH DAVYDOV, Lieutenant-Colonel of the Akhtyrsky Hussar Regiment, in command of guerrilla detachments

ANDREY BEKETOV	} guerrilla officers
BEDRYAGA	

FOMA	} peasant guerrillas
STEPAN	
YEGOR	

VANYA, a peasant boy

NASTYA, a serf girl

VASIL, a guerrilla

A LANDOWNER

HIS WIFE

NAPOLEON I, Emperor of France

COUNT DARU, his secretary

COUNT LAURISTON, French Envoy to the Russians

MARSHAL MURAT, King of Naples

MARSHAL NEY, Duke of Elchingen

MARSHAL BERTHIER, Prince of Neuchâtel

MARSHAL BESSIÈRES, Duke of Istria

RIMBAUD } Grenadiers of the Napoleon Old Guard
HENRI }

LIACHOWSKI, a Polish Captain

SAMBORSKI, a Polish Colonel

Officers of the Day, Adjutants, Aides-de-camp, Kutuzov's Doctor,
Russian Soldiers, Russian Officers, Peasants, Peasant Women, Cos-
sacks, Couriers, French Grenadiers, Polish Officers, Polish Uhlans

Time of Action, 1812. Place of Action: Act I, Scene 1—The Palace at Vilno. Scene 2—The Winter Palace at St. Petersburg. Scene 3—Outskirts of a Village. Act II, Scene 4—Left Flank of the Russian Army. Scene 5—Fili; Peasant's Hut; Russian Staff Conference. Act III, Scene 6—Moscow, Kremlin. Scene 7—Russian Camp at Tarutino, Kutuzov's Tent. Act IV, Scene 8—A Forest. Scene 9—Village of Smorgon. Act V, Scene 10—The Palace at Vilno. Scene 11—Town of Bunzlau in German Silesia.

FIELD MARSHAL KUTUZOV

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

The palace at Vilno. A large hall, in whose depths, beyond wide glass doors, is a balcony which opens on the principal street of Vilno. Near the entrance, on guard, RIMBAUD and HENRI, two old Grenadiers. Through the glass separating the balcony from the hall can be seen the figure of NAPOLEON, surrounded by a small group of his officers, including NEY, BERTHIER, BESSIÈRES, MURAT, LAURISTON, and DARU.

A parade of French soldiers is taking place on the street below the balcony. The sheen of passing bayonets is seen above the balustrade of the balcony; the high black shakoës bob in rhythmic movement. The even tread of the columns of the Napoleonic army of invasion shakes the street. The welcoming cries of the population, the blare of military bands, all give token of the mighty movement of the French hosts.

A song rises from below and fills the hall of the palace.

The Song

When young Dunois the warrior
Made ready forth to fare,
He bowed before the Virgin,
Upon his lips a prayer:
"I beg with humble spirit
Before I venture far,
The love of my fair lady,
And glory in the war!"

VOICES IN THE CROWD ON THE STREET: Long live Napoleon the Emperor! . . .
Long live Napoleon! . . .

Long life to France! . . . (*Some POLISH OFFICERS are talking amongst themselves on the forestage.*)

FIRST POLISH OFFICER: The war, my lords, looks like a long parade. I haven't seen a Russian.

SECOND POLISH OFFICER: Nor have I. (*A gray-haired Pole in civilian clothes, with a saber cut on his face, walks past the POLISH OFFICERS.*)

LIACHOWSKI: Pan Sigismund Samborski! (*The passer-by stops.*) May I ask

The good Pan to excuse me in his heart,
But it is strange . . .

SAMBORSKI: What is so strange, dear sir?

LIACHOWSKI: That I have recognized the Pan by his gray hair
And by the saber cut across his face.

But why, good Pan, are you without your weapons?

SAMBORSKI: Dear Pan Liachowski, I'm an officer,
And not a hireling in the Frenchman's service.

FIRST POLISH OFFICER: What does the good Pan say?

LIACHOWSKI: And so the colonel
No longer aids the cause of freeing Poland?
Or has he lost his faith in glorious France?

SAMBORSKI: I am too old for faith.

LIACHOWSKI: I still remember
Kosciusko and the Pan, and Russian shrapnel
Whistling above their heads as they drove forward.
If it were not for that, I might have thought
That Pan Samborski was not patriotic.

SAMBORSKI: I do not know who is the patriot.
I do not think this is a place to argue,
For often in the past the French betrayed us,
And in the future too they'll sell us out.
How long, good Poles, will you believe the words
Of him who promises a new-born Poland?
For more than once his words have covered up
Carnage by daylight so that he might hold

The Poles in hand. And now again he leads
 Our foolish officers to feed the cannon,
 And hides his looting and the rape of freedom
 Behind the sacred name of our Kosciusko.
 No. This is a manifesto I have known
 Too well both in and out for six long years.
 And I would rather be unpatriotic
 Than be important in the role of fool! (*The POLISH OFFICERS bare their
 sabers and rush at SAMBORSKI.*)

FIRST POLISH OFFICER: Dog's blood! Old traitor!

SECOND POLISH OFFICER: Finish him right now!

LIACHOWSKI: You dare to bark at emperors, toothless dog! (*NAPO-
 LEON has walked in from the balcony, with his suite, and speaks
 to MURAT, pointing at the POLES.*)

NAPOLEON: Tell them to stop.

MURAT: Attention, gentlemen! Sheathe your naked blades!

NAPOLEON: What happened here?

LIACHOWSKI: This ancient toothless hound
 Insulted you.

FIRST POLISH OFFICER: He dared . . .

SECOND POLISH OFFICER: He called you names. . . .

NAPOLEON: What did he say?

LIACHOWSKI: That you would never give
 Freedom to Poland, for you never gave it.

NAPOLEON (*to SAMBORSKI*): Who are you?

SAMBORSKI: Sigismund Samborski.

NAPOLEON (*digging in his memory*): A decoration at Vienna?

SAMBORSKI: Yes.

NAPOLEON: You do not wear it?

SAMBORSKI: I wear it, but not always.

LIACHOWSKI: We are ashamed that he's a Polish colonel.

NAPOLEON: I did not ask you . . . You fought before Vienna,
 At Friedland? . . .

SAMBORSKI: And at Austerlitz.

NAPOLEON: I know.

It is to be regretted that a soldier

Like you should not bear service in my armies. (*To the POLISH OFFICERS.*)

Shame on you, gentlemen. Upon one's own glory

No soldier lifts a hand. The colonel in the wars

Has paid with his own blood for the full right

To trust in me, or disbelieve in me. (*To SAMBORSKI.*)

Now go. (*SAMBORSKI goes out.*)

MURAT (*to the POLISH OFFICERS*): The law of knighthood frowns
On lifting arms against a man unarmed.

LIACHOWSKI (*to the POLISH OFFICERS*): A true exemplar of great
spirit, gentlemen!

POLISH OFFICERS: Long live the Emperor Napoleon! (*They go out.*)

NAPOLEON: You, Count Daru, will issue on the moment

An order to forbid Samborski Vilno.

We have remained too long in this old town.

Let me dictate to you another order

Intended for Davout.

DARU: I listen.

NAPOLEON (*dictating*): Marshal:

You will proceed at once in forced and sudden march

To intercept Bagration's Second Army

Which is advancing from the Mogilev marshes

To join the Army of Barclay de Tolly.

They must be stopped. I shall await your courier.

Better advance at night and all unseen,

Strive to cut off the rear of your opponent.

You have my wishes for a happy journey. (*He signs the order.*)

LAURISTON (*with a sigh*): We could have peace, but not after this
order.

NAPOLEON (*to RIMBAUD*): Well, my Rimbaud? How do you like
this Vilno?

Does not the city please you?

RIMBAUD: It is dusty,

Your Majesty.

(Enter an ADJUTANT.)

ADJUTANT: Tsar Alexander's envoy!

MURAT: I swear that he will offer peace to us.

BESSIÈRES: But devil take it all! Without a battle

To go back home to France?

NEY: That would be sardonic.

NAPOLÉON (to DARU): See to it, Count, that Alexander's envoy
Be brought to me at once.

LAURISTON: And do you know

Who has been sent as an ambassador

To us from Russia? Think of it, gentlemen—

The Minister of Police!

BESSIÈRES: Who?

LAURISTON: Balashev.

MURAT: They want to use the power of their police
To get us out of Vilno. That is curious. (Enter BALASHEV.)

NAPOLÉON: I am glad to see you. How is my royal brother?

BALASHEV: Your Majesty, receive the deep assurance
Of my unwavering respect for you.

But let me first discharge my present duty

And hand you this epistle. . . . In the midst of war

We all depend on chance and its vagaries,

That may, for all we know, lie in a royal letter.

I was held up by your advancing troops,

And for the space of two full days I stopped. . . .

His Majesty, the Emperor of Russia,

Was in good health the last time that I saw him

Right here in Vilno, where I see you now.

I was to go to Kovno, but your movements forced me

To make my way back here. Your rapid progress

Has cost me much annoyance and hard labor,

For while I left here so that I might meet you,

You entered Vilno with your troops yourself.

And so at last I came back to the doors

From which I left to look for you in Kovno.

NAPOLEON (*reading the letter*): You have become convinced that
armies move much faster

Than diplomats and councilors of state?

BALASHEV: Diplomacy moves round about. Its goal
Is never reached too swiftly, and if arms
Are used to stop its slow and tortuous course
It cannot ever even move a jot.

NAPOLEON: The Emperor of Russia offers peace.
The time is wrong for it. . . . Please understand.
I should be glad to speak to him at once.
We spoke in Erfurt, and before in Tilsit.
But has it any sense? Please understand.
My purposes are hard, they are not vain.
You promised me that English manufactures
Would never reach the piers in Russian ports.
They send them to you still, another flag,
And not the British Union Jack above them.
But let that pass. . . . (*He puts his hand on his sword hilt.*)
It would have been a very easy matter
To lay this war off for a long, long time—
Your Emperor the master of the East,
I of the West. There's nothing to divide
Between us, for our countries do not touch,
And war between us never would have risen
If it were not that Russian bayonets
Became the points of English politics.

BALASHEV: Your Majesty, I think the difficulty
Rests not alone on England. Is that cause for war? . . .
But has not Russia always, at her will,
Traded with whom she pleased? Is she not free
To do now as before? Who has the strength
To tell her what to do, what not to do?
That is the soul of Russian independence.

NAPOLEON: It is this argument that war will settle.
We cannot understand each other, so it seems.

Although your Emperor was my honored ally
But yesterday, yet I cannot depend
In any sense upon your independence.

BALASHEV: Your Majesty, it is no longer secret—
That is, if memory does not deceive me,
That in alliance with you, you proposed
That we advance on India.

NAPOLEON: And why not?

BALASHEV: Then peace is now unthinkable?

NAPOLEON: Even now
I love your Emperor as my own dear brother.
But it is never sympathy alone
That masters policy. . . . But dinner waits.
Istria and Neuchâtel will share it with us . . .

(BALASHEV bows, ready to leave, but NAPOLEON detains him.)

But tell me, General, from here to Moscow
What is the way that you consider nearest,
So that we might in honor and in justice
Conclude the peace as early as we can?

BALASHEV: There are many roads that lead to the heart of Moscow.
The Swedish Karl once tried it through Poltava.

CURTAIN

ACT ONE

SCENE TWO

The apartment of Alexander I in the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg. ALEXANDER sits at a table. Enter BALASHEV, carrying an armful of state papers, some of them half-folded, some rolled up, with seals hanging from them.

ALEXANDER: Again petitions?

BALASHEV: Near the palace entrance,

Your Majesty, there mill in many numbers
The nobles' representatives, the clerics,
And various others from the rest of Russia.

ALEXANDER: And all of them desire to see Kutuzov
In place of our de Tolly?

BALASHEV: Yes.

ALEXANDER: I'm ready
For his replacement. But will it be good—
Kutuzov for de Tolly? . . . Better still—
To give to Bennigsen the high command,
And not Kutuzov.

BALASHEV: If I may make so bold,
Your Majesty, there is one little matter—

ALEXANDER: What little matter?

BALASHEV: Majesty, his name
Is German. . . . What are we to do?
The people and the very soldiers, sire,
Hold no belief in it. They want a Russian,
Only a Russian general for the post.
And this desire of theirs upsets me greatly.

ALEXANDER: So you advise me, Count, like all the rest,
To name Kutuzov? As if the only light
In all this darkness is Kutuzov?

BALASHEV: Sire,
I share with you your hatred for the man,
And I distrust him. That may be good cause
For you to trust him with the high command
Completely. Napoleon Bonaparte
Is a great soldier. Never such a brain
Of subtle tactics and strategical
Has swept the world. The continent of Europe
This man has conquered by himself alone.

ALEXANDER: But I remember well that once, at Eylau,
Napoleon gave ground to Bennigsen.

BALASHEV: And then at Friedland, Bennigsen was beaten,

While old Kutuzov led his armies safely
Into the forests.

ALEXANDER: The old fox saved his tail.

BALASHEV: Then let the same old fox, his tail and all,
Give battle to the lion on the hunt.

ALEXANDER: You're picturesque and persuasive, Count,
And your example strikes me very well. . . .

(Enter an ADJUTANT.)

ADJUTANT: Your Majesty, a courier has come
From the Grand Duchess with a note for you. *(Enter COURIER with
the letter. ALEXANDER dismisses him with a gesture, and he goes
out with the ADJUTANT. ALEXANDER reads the letter, trying not to
betray his excitement.)*

ALEXANDER: Listen, dear Count. There in the waiting room,
Is England's envoy, Wilson. Send him in.
Then have an Aide-de-camp bring in Kutuzov. *(BALASHEV bows and
goes out. ALEXANDER rereads the letter.)*

My sister's right, as usual. I'll protect myself
From evil prejudices in this hour of evil,
For destiny is lifting from my shoulders
The yoke of dangerous responsibility—
And the petitions of the people come in time. . . .
They want Kutuzov? They can have Kutuzov.
They have elected him. He is their leader.
Let him lead on their armies. I shall seem to act
Nobly in bending to the weight of the petitions
Of all my people. For everybody knows full well
That Bennigsen was my choice for the post.
Perhaps the hand of Providence guides mine.
For they shall answer for Kutuzov, they, the people.
Yes, when he shall be conquered like the rest,
I shall not answer to the world for him. . . .

(Enter SIR ROBERT WILSON.)

Sir Robert Wilson, I invited you
That I might tell you in sincerity

That Bennigsen's appointment is withdrawn.

WILSON: But, Majesty—

ALEXANDER: Here's a score of documents—

Petitions. . . . Everybody wants Kutuzov.

WILSON: Your Majesty, remember what you told me.

ALEXANDER: I am against it, yes. But I comply
With the desire expressed by all my nation.

WILSON: But Bennigsen . . .

ALEXANDER: You yourself will hasten
To meet him at the Headquarters, Sir Robert,
And tell him I was forced to name Kutuzov
Against my will. Let Bennigsen, as of old,
Under the headship of Barclay de Tolly,
Tell me of all that happens in each detail,
So that when at last defeat attends Kutuzov
Upon the field of battle, we shall know
The reasons for it, all the little facts
From information sent to us beforehand.

WILSON: Your Majesty, I see your subtle thought.

(*Enter the* ADJUTANT.)

ADJUTANT: Your Majesty, Kutuzov waits upon you.

ALEXANDER: Let him come in. (*The* ADJUTANT *goes out*. KUTUZOV
comes in.)

I'm glad to see you, Prince.

KUTUZOV: With the last strength the Lord has given me,
I hurried at your call, your Majesty.

ALEXANDER: Even the young may envy you your haste.
I'm glad to see you in good health.

KUTUZOV: I'm glad myself,
Your Majesty, that I can still obey you.

ALEXANDER: It's pleasant, Prince, to have a servant like you.
But there, upon the field of battle, waits
Your fatherland, in need of you today. (*He shows* KUTUZOV *the*
petitions.)

Vox populi, vox Dei. They have called you.

The fatherland and I confer upon you
Command of all the arms of our great nation.
Go serve them. For you have my faith as well
As theirs. And I believe in your success.
For never have the wishes of my people
Been mine as much before as they are now.

KUTUZOV: Your Majesty, I'm happy that until now
Barclay de Tolly has not lost a single battle,
And that the French have never caught him napping.
I cannot take the post. It is not fear that stops me,
But is there any need of it? Such a decision
May be untimely.

ALEXANDER: But Barclay de Tolly
Has only led a strategy of retreats.

KUTUZOV: This strategy of his seems natural to me
If it should lead to victory in the end.

(Enter the ADJUTANT.)

ADJUTANT: Your Majesty, a courier from the army.

(Enter VOLKONSKY.)

ALEXANDER: You, Prince Volkonsky? What's the news you bring?

VOLKONSKY: A letter, Sire, from Prince Bagration.

ALEXANDER *(reading the letter)*: My God! Barclay de Tolly led again
The army in retreat, and now we've lost Smolensk.

VOLKONSKY: Yes, Majesty.

ALEXANDER: And further on he writes
De Tolly is a traitor . . .

KUTUZOV: The Prince is hasty.
He judges without weighing what he says.

ALEXANDER: No, Prince. You must not now defend de Tolly.
Bagration is hasty. You may be right.
But we cannot retreat another inch in safety.
The fate of Moscow troubles me too much. . . .
What after Moscow? . . . Is it all of Russia?

KUTUZOV: Your Majesty, we have given up Smolensk?
It is the key to Moscow, that is all.

ALEXANDER: In this hard hour, the fatherland and I
Entrust you with the fate of Russia, Prince.

CURTAIN

ACT ONE

SCENE THREE

The outskirts of a village. A hut. A fence. In the distance, fields and forests. Before the arrival of the French on the scene, peasants crowd the stage. They appear and disappear again and again. When the curtain rises, STEPAN, FOMA, NASTYA, VANYA, VASILY, the LANDOWNER and his WIFE are on stage, among others. STEPAN wears an old-fashioned military hat, once worn by the soldiers of Suvorov. He limps.

FOMA: The French are near here.

VANYA: Near here? Where?

FOMA: Four versts at most, or maybe only three. (*The LANDOWNER and his WIFE pass on the news.*)

LANDOWNER: The French are near here.

WIFE: Oh, mon Dieu! Oh, mon Dieu!

Oh, mon ami, what shall we do?

LANDOWNER: We shall,

Oh, ma chérie, be forced to pack.

WIFE: Mon cher.

Tout de suite. (*They go out.*)

VASILY: Well, what will happen now?

You there, Stepan, you saw the French before?

STEPAN: Oh, yes.

FOMA: Well, what are they?

STEPAN: Just people

That talk in French, just like our masters do.

FOMA: I think it would be best to run from them.

VASIL: Our way is to the woods, where none can find us.

FOMA: We had one master. But if they multiply
We'll never have a single chance to live.

(*A cannon shot in the distance. Enter BAGRATION and BENNIGSEN.
The PEASANTS hide behind the fence.*)

BENNIGSEN: I see, good Prince, that you are very glad
Kutuzov is appointed. I hear that you have written
The Tsar that Barclay is a traitor. . . . No?

BAGRATION: I have.

BENNIGSEN: I am not shocked, Bagration,
That you do not believe Barclay de Tolly.
I also entertain some thoughts about him.
But then, Kutuzov too. . . .

BAGRATION: What do you mean by "too"?
You have begun, dear Bennigsen. Now finish.

BENNIGSEN: To be sincere, I don't believe Kutuzov
Will be much faster. It is all the same,
Kutuzov or de Tolly. Though the first's in honor
With all the Russian armies. I will say—
One lost Smolensk. The other will lose Moscow.

BAGRATION: You've said enough, but, Bennigsen, you lie!

BENNIGSEN (*grasping the hilt of his sword, but controlling himself*):
I pardon you your heat, Bagration,
But I believe your conscience will smart sorely
When you remember what it was you said.
You see, I do not hide my real opinions.
You seem enslaved to hope that your Kutuzov
Will give Napoleon battle. But if under Kutuzov
The army finds itself completely in retreat?

BAGRATION: Let us not look too far into the future. (BENNIGSEN
*shrugs his shoulders, and goes out. Enter DENIS DAVYDOV, fol-
lowed at a distance by ANDREY BEKETOV and BEDRYAGA.*)

What do you want, Denis?

DAVYDOV: I'm bored, your Excellency.

BAGRATION: Why bored?

DAVYDOV: I beg your kind forgiveness! . . .
Not even to try out my pistol on the range?
Not even cross a sword with an opponent?
When I was Aide-de-camp to you, I can remember
There would be times when carrying a message
I'd bare my saber for a glancing cut.
Is this the life for me, an old Hussar?
I'll meet my death, it seems, at friendly banquets
From batteries of old and dusty bottles
And not French cannon.

BAGRATION: Not my fault, Denis.

DAVYDOV: I know it, Excellency. We are passing
Not through the land of alien opponents—
We're running back through our own woods and fields.
Ah, Excellency, if I only had
One hundred old Hussars, two hundred Cossacks,
I would have made a raid on the French rear.
Perhaps my little plan, my humble plan,
May please Kutuzov? I have heard the peasants
Are hiding in the forests, and I hope
To get together with them on the sly.
I know they'll help me. They themselves have done
Much harm to the invader when they could.
And if I had my men, upon the highways
I would destroy his couriers and supplies.

BAGRATION: The risk is great, but your idea is good.

DAVYDOV: The risk must be assumed, for war is always war.
There I will take a train, there capture a few men.
I'll find a place to swing a wider arc,
And if death comes, 'tis better to die in battle
Than croak of boredom at the headquarters.

BAGRATION: And best of all, you'll be your own commander?

DAVYDOV: To be completely just, there's truth in that.
And to be far away from images of sadness—
Those uniformed dandies always in first place

When the commander calls him to his table,
Begging for higher rank with the dessert.
But as for me, if ever I advance,
It can be only in my saddle with my boots on.

BAGRATION: Old Hetman Platov came to me last week. . . .
When we gave up Smolensk he came to me
Without his uniform, in a coat.
He was ashamed, he said, to wear his uniform,
The Russian uniform. (*The thunder of cannon sounds in the distance.*)

There will be battle
Today, I think, Denis.

DAVYDOV: Prince, from your lips
I sip the honey. We are tired with waiting.

BAGRATION: Well, it may be we'll celebrate some time
Kutuzov's coming. I will talk to him
Today, Denis, about your just desires.
I like what you are asking.

DAVYDOV: Many thanks.

BAGRATION: Come round to see me soon and get your answer. (*He goes out. DAVYDOV sits down on the embankment near the hut. BEKETOV and BEDRYAGA approach him.*)

BEKETOV: Why do you scowl, Denis? The whole day, sorrowing
You sit beside the fire, or seek the woods.

DAVYDOV: Oh . . . foolishness. . . . I spent my early youth
And childhood in this very neighborhood . . .
I visited the places that I know . . .
No people . . . silence . . . and my heart grew heavy. . . .
This village is the very next to mine. (*He points.*)
And there where now the French stand by their cannon,
I used to practice shooting from my bow,
And my old servant yelled: "Don't climb the trees!"
Here, I remember, during my vacations
I used to run around with Nastya, serf girl.
My, she was quick! . . . Now all these thoughts in deluge

Rise in my mind and fill my heart with grief.
I see where I built fortresses of sand
A true enough redoubt has been erected. . . .
My heart is a Hussar's. And more than once I've proved
I can't be conquered by caress or tear,
But when I look around, tears, of themselves,
Roll their unwonted way down my cold cheeks.
I never knew such evil times would come,
And that my bivouac would be spread here . . .
Oh, fatherland! How much that one word holds
Of courage and of happiness and hurt!

(*NASTYA and VASILY come out from behind the fence.*)

NASTYA: Denis Vasilich! Master!

DAVYDOV: Who are you?

NASTYA: I'm Nastya.

DAVYDOV: Nastya?

NASTYA: Yes, my name is Nastya.

DAVYDOV: Where are my people? And why are you here?
Have they forgotten you?

NASTYA: Of my own free will
I stayed on here.

DAVYDOV: And who is this?

NASTYA: Vasili,
A neighbor's coachman. (*She falls on her knees.*)
Master, spare my life.

Forgive us, Master. . . . How we begged and cried
To make them let us go . . . the forest or the steppe,
Only to be together!

DAVYDOV: So you ran away?
I want to hear it all.

NASTYA: We will explain it, Master.
The first time that I met him, it was there
Beside the river, right behind our fields,
Two springs ago, while cutting winter wheat.
He swung a scythe, and I . . . (*She weeps.*)

DAVYDOV: Well, what? (*He lifts her from her knees.*)

NASTYA: I raked . . .

He is not one of ours . . . Vasili is a neighbor's . . .

And your dear mother is so very kind . . .

I knelt before her, begging for a wedding.

DAVYDOV: From harvest to the altar?

NASTYA: No, dear Master.

We kept the matter secret for a year.

But there was never word of secret marriage

Or anything like that. Vasili was the neighbor's,

And though he was no Frenchman, still he was a stranger,

And in my foolishness I fell in love with him

As if he really belonged to us.

And so I knelt before the mistress with my tears.

And after she had listened, she gave orders

To have the carriage ready. She said that she would visit

The neighbor, and come back with my Vasili.

Then she returned. But she was all alone.

The neighbor would not sell her my Vasili.

He was too good a man, he said, he was too healthy,

And he belonged where he was born, to him.

The mistress was all sympathy and pity,

But nothing could be done. . . . And when the French

Came near here, everybody ran away.

And then Vasili and I—we came together. (*To VASIL.*)

Why are you silent? Why don't you ask the master?

You should have said a word or two at least.

VASIL: Your master is a military man,

And we are talking of domestic matters.

(*BEDRYAGA goes out.*)

DAVYDOV: My best to you. Long life to you, and joy.

If love has led your footsteps into evil,

In justice you would never have your joy

If evil destiny had not put in its help.

(*BEDRYAGA runs in. A cry of "Hurrah" is heard in the distance.*)

BEDRYAGA: Kutuzov has arrived. He called a meeting.
He is reviewing troops. He'll be here soon.

DAVYDOV: Well, now at last we'll have decision, brothers,
Between retreat and battle with the foe.

(NASTYA and VASILY rejoin the PEASANTS behind the fence. A tremendous "Hurrah" thunders offstage. KUTUZOV appears, his back to the audience. He speaks to the troops who are offstage.)

KUTUZOV: I look upon this many numbered host
Trained to the hardships of heroic battle.
My mind fills with misgiving. How to have this army
Fall back forever in a long retreat?

ORDERS AND VOICES OFFSTAGE: Hurrah! . . .
Close ranks . . .
Guide right . . .
Troops forward . . .

(Enter BAGRATION, BARCLAY DE TOLLY, YERMOLOV, BENNIGSEN, TOLL, VOLKONSKY, and KONOVNITZIN.)

KUTUZOV (*sitting down on the embankment*): Let us consider . . .

ORDERS OFFSTAGE: March! . . .

KUTUZOV (*continuing*): the further ways
Of our campaign. (BENNIGSEN gives him documents. He pushes them away.)

There is no need of paper.
I have seen much paper. Sometime, a little later
I'll look again. And now good Colonel Toll (TOLL salutes joyfully,
and comes forward.)

Has found us a position, which, upon my word,
Ill-suits our purpose, whether we stay and fight,
Or still retreat. (TOLL retreats in confusion.)

BENNIGSEN (*irately*): Perhaps as far as Moscow?

KUTUZOV (*to BARCLAY DE TOLLY*): Shall we retreat, Mikhail Bogdanovich, to Gzhatsk?

BARCLAY DE TOLLY: I will do just exactly what you order.

KUTUZOV: The key to Moscow is Smolensk. And if de Tolly
Has yielded it to the French, we must remember

That it behooves us most to save our armies.
We shall not give them Moscow. Yet I suppose
We have but one thing we can do at present—
To leave this most impossible position.

(*To BAGRATION.*)

Prince, tell me what you think.

BAGRATION: There's more than just one road
From this position. For the time is ripe
To leave this place in order to go forward.
When shall we put an end to our retreats?
I will not hide, Field Marshal, that we waited
For you like youths who in the hour of battle
Wait for the bugler who has risen late.
We waited victory. But in reality
It is already almost twenty days
That we have shown our heels to our old foes.
And as for me, I can no more run backward. (*BARCLAY DE TOLLY puts
his hand on his sword hilt, and walks aside.*)
I do not understand this subtle difference—(*Lowering his voice.*)
I could have told it to him in his face—(*He gestures towards BARCLAY
DE TOLLY.*)

Between the strategies used by Barclay de Tolly
And the vague tactics that all cowards use.
Or is it that there is a breed of cowards
Who run in other ways than we retreat?

BARCLAY DE TOLLY (*turning on him from the distance*): I have
surrendered all the High Command
To Prince Kutuzov, and to him I answer.

BAGRATION (*to BARCLAY DE TOLLY*): I think that you'd have shown a
finer face

As a commander if you had surrendered
To Prince Kutuzov somewhat ere Smolensk
Instead of some days after you had lost it.

BENNIGSEN: The Prince talks sense. I do not know myself

Why we should not advance upon Smolensk
From here, and meet Napoleon in the fight he wishes.

KUTUZOV: Well, if he wishes it, it must be good for him.
I think we still have time to meet with him
If there is need for that, and lay our lives down.
But anything that's good for Bonaparte
Is by its very nature bad for us.

KONOVNITZIN (*to YERMOLOV*): What do you say, Yermolov?

YERMOLOV: Can you bear with ease
The rape of our dear fatherland by the French?
And our just fury, thirsting for revenge
Does not impel you to the waiting battle,
And does not tell you to destroy his armies
So that no man may ever dare to follow him?

KUTUZOV: You do not need a Marshal, but a bear
Blind in his fury to surrounding danger.

KONOVNITZIN: But there, behind our backs, is holy Moscow.

KUTUZOV: But if I do not save the army now
From many battles, who will help me drive
The foe beyond the reaches of the Niemen?
You hold the wreaths of glory very dear.
You look for victories. I seek their meaning. (*There is a pause.*)
My grandson asked me lately: "Can it be,
Dear Granddad, that at last you have decided
To beat Napoleon on the field of battle?"
(He's five years old, this little Russian Guardsman.)
"As far as beating him, perhaps I shan't,"
I said. "But there is hope that I will fool him." (*He dismisses the
generals with a gesture, but retains BAGRATION.*)

Prince Pyotr Ivanich. You will please stay here. . . .
I am your friend. I tell you, on my honor,
It does no good to you to share the road
With Bennigsen. You are a different man.
You seek for battle with a heart of courage,
Ready to meet the enemy face to face,

But Bennigsen, I think, employs another,
A different strategy. Not in vain is Wilson
His nearest friend. You have not heard of him?
Well, Bennigsen is entered in my book—
A Russian general of German blood—
But, as a man, almost an English subject.
And you, Bagration,
May be a hero, but you are a man of temper,
And not the only one upon my staff.
They all love you. They all will follow you.
Well, is that best for us? . . . Now I have warned you,
For you're my friend. You see, I do not hide
From you the things that I would never tell
Another anywhere . . . Why don't you go to Barclay
And shake his hand?

BAGRATION: But I have written letters
To Alexander in which I called him traitor.

KUTUZOV: That was your young blood playing. Long ago,
When I was young I did the same things too.
You'd better go to see him. Speak to him.
They're angry at him, all his quondam friends,
And what he says I do not dare uphold
Without being shamed before the army—
The further Bonaparte invades our land
The less and less his army will become.
In one place he will leave a garrison,
And in another rearguards. And he knows not
What happens to the armies in his rear.
Have you not heard that our good Russian peasants
Are now at play behind him?

BAGRATION: Just before,
Denis Davydov asked for a detachment
To harry at the Frenchman's rear.

KUTUZOV: There's sense
In that, and courage. And it is a pity

That the results of such attacks are secret.
Yet what of that? Let him have fifty Hussars,
A Cossack squadron. He will find the others
Whenever and wherever he appears.

BAGRATION: But it is such a small beginning.

KUTUZOV: I can't spare

More soldiers, and there is tremendous risk.

Well, Prince, good-bye. You'll find me with the Guard.

Order this village be evacuated,

And leave Neverovsky here with a rearguard. (*He goes out at one side, BAGRATION at the other. The PEASANTS come from behind the fence. A bugler plays retreat in the distance.*)

VANYA: What do the Frenchies look like? Have they horns?

Tell me, Uncle Stepan.

STEPAN: They are not devils.

FOMA: Perhaps not devils, and perhaps much worse.

VASIL: Foma, we think the same thoughts, you and I.

FIRST PEASANT: Should we stay here or run?

SECOND PEASANT: Where can we run?

What do you think, Foma?

FIRST PEASANT: The masters'd better run!

FOMA: It's best to watch the Frenchies from the woods.

If things go well, we're here—if not, we're there.

STEPAN: Well, men, what do you think? Shall we, the peasants,
Bring out our bread and salt to meet them, or
Use sharper measures with the unbidden guests?

FIRST PEASANT: Try meeting them with bread and salt, Stepan.
There's bread enough in Russia. They may be kind.

STEPAN: Let someone else do that.

SECOND PEASANT: You are the first amongst us.

STEPAN: The great Suvorov, may the good Lord rest him,
Taught us to meet such guests in other ways.

NASTYA: What have you thought up, fools? Do you desire
To live under the French? Where is your sense of shame? (*She picks up an axe and a pitchfork.*)

FIRST PEASANT: Look to your Nastasya.

VASILY: Where are you going?

FOMA: Vasili, hold her. She is under your command.
What do you want, mad girl? To play with bayonets?

NASTYA: Well, if the other peasants here are like you,
If it's the same to them whether the French are here
Or not, so long as they have cabbage soup and porridge,
You'll never gather soldiers in this crowd.

They may well learn to fight from me, a woman.

Vasili!

VASILY: What?

NASTYA: Pick up the tongs at home,
Take out the cabbage soup and clean the house.
Look that you bear no children in my absence.
Faugh, masters! . . .

STEPAN: God, what a woman! She's a heroine!

FIRST PEASANT: Hey, Nastya, stop. Stick out your chest, and not
Your belly.

FOMA: If you married twenty Frenchies,
Apollyon would be finished.

NASTYA: Little jokes
Are not in place here, and they are not funny. (*Old man YEGOR comes
in. He walks slowly.*)

VANYA: Look, Grandfather. . . . (*He runs to meet YEGOR.*)

FOMA: I see it's old Yegor.

NASTYA (*bowing deeply*): How did you, Fatherkin, all by yourself,
Come from the village?

YEGOR: There is no more village.
There was a village . . . but it is no more. . . .

NASTYA: What happened, Fatherkin? . . . Sit down, my dear one,
here. (*She helps YEGOR sit down on the embankment.*)

FOMA: Yegoriy Fyodorich, why should you walk
At your great age?

YEGOR (*rising and bowing to the PEASANTS*): Peasants, I bow to you.

FOMA: In answer to your bow, the peasants all

Bow deep to you. Long life to you, Yegoriy!

What do you want of us?

YEGOR: Oh, sorrow, sorrow!

The foreign brood is sitting in my house. (*A cannon shot is heard*

They all cross themselves. There is a pause.)

As soon as they came on us they took over

The village in their hands. They stole all that they saw.

One grabbed a girl, another took a cow.

They raped, they burned. . . . The shame of it, the horror!

NASTYA: And what about the peasants?

YEGOR: The peasants picked up poles,

Swung with their axes. . . . Many men were killed,

Three quarters of the village, maybe more.

The blood ran in a river, brothers, in a river,

And Mother Earth was groaning, our great mother . . .

A PEASANT WOMAN: Father Yegor, is my son Frol alive?

YEGOR: I do not know, Aksinyushka, I do not know. . . .

By back roads after midnight I came here.

I do not know. . . . O men who love the earth,

Four score of years I've lived amongst you.

The Lord insulted me with six weak daughters

And never gave me one strong son to fight.

NASTYA: Come, Fatherkin, enough. What are you saying?

For I, your daughter, cannot listen to it.

If you have not a son, then why insult me?

Come, bless me that I may take up the work of men. (*She kneels before her father. YEGOR embraces her, making the sign of the cross. Musket fire is heard.*)

STEPAN: Drive all your cattle to the woods.

FOMA: Leave nothing you can take.

Kill what you cannot take, and set the fields on fire

That not a living thing nor bread nor seed

Be left to the invading infidel.

(*Enter DAVYDOV and BEKETOV. The sky begins to turn red.*)

BEKETOV: The French patrols are marching through the village.

DAVYDOV: Tell the Hussars to turn into that forest. (BEKETOV goes out.)

Will you stay here, or will you go with me?

STEPAN: Why not go with you? But we have no arms.

DAVYDOV: To those who want to fight we will give muskets.

But can you ride?

VASILY: We can. We are not infantry.

We're coachmen.

DAVYDOV: Then come along with me. (*He goes out, followed by VASILY and some of the peasants.*)

FOMA: The village should be burned.

YEGOR: I'll burn it. You go on.

I am too old to walk the forest ways.

NASTYA: No, Fatherkin . . .

YEGOR: Go on, go on your way.

NASTYA: What are you saying? Fatherkin of mine . . .

YEGOR: Go with the peasants far away from this . . .

It's all the same to me, my daughter, now.

Remember me on Saint Gregory's Day—

NASTYA: I will not leave you.

YEGOR: Go on your way, go on.

The Frenchmen will be here, and in a hurry.

I blessed you to take up the work of men,

Then, like a man, take up your arms and go. (*All but YEGOR go out.*

He gathers straw from the ground. VANYA creeps out from behind the fence.)

Why didn't you go with them?

VANYA: I'm curious to see

How Frenchies look. And have they horns or not?

YEGOR: I see your interest in them is serious.

But underneath their hats you'll never see

Their horns. Their hats are big—like this.

VANYA: They'll take their hats off yet, and I will see.

YEGOR: Here, strike some sparks, and don't make any noise.

Now we will put a ladder to that roof. (*He picks up a ladder.*)

Let it burn up, for even though fire is cruel,

Yet fire itself has never frightened me.

There was a time when fire was our foe,

The time has come when fire is our best friend. (*He and VANYA, carrying the ladder, go behind the house. There is a pause. The stage is empty. RIMBAUD and HENRI steal carefully in. They are followed by some other FRENCH SOLDIERS. They examine the environs carefully and thoroughly. RIMBAUD sits down on the embankment and leans on his musket, plunged deep in thought.*)

HENRI: Why do you grieve, Rimbaud? Do you remember Your Gascony?

RIMBAUD: I have forgotten Gascony.

HENRI: What do you grieve for then? (*The sky reddens.*)

RIMBAUD: Look, there's a fire again.

HENRI: It's like the glow beneath the Spanish heavens.

RIMBAUD: I thought of that, but I remember Italy.

HENRI: Ah, Italy! We were there, long ago.

Perhaps you can remember young Concita?

RIMBAUD: Yes, I remember her, and others too.

HENRI: Soldiers, he grieves for Italy. . . .

RIMBAUD: Tell me, why not?

Do you remember Rome?

HENRI: What is to remember there, the Pope?

RIMBAUD: Do you remember when we entered Naples
It rained. . . .

HENRI: It rained?

RIMBAUD: Yes, there was real rain,
A rain of flowers. 'Twas July, like now.
But how those warm Italians welcomed us!
"Long live the great Republic of the French
That brings us freedom on its bayonets!"
And roses rained on streets beneath our feet.
Antwerp, Vienna, Rome, the Nile and Egypt. . . .
We marched through all the world. No obstacles;

No one ever could stand up to us.

(*To a young GRENADIER.*)

Why do you look at me? Perhaps the ancient dust

Of all the Pharaohs sticks to my boot leather?

We made our marches. . . . But these last twelve years

We make no more such marches.

(*To HENRI.*)

You and I

Have seen great changes come upon the world,

And only curses follow in our wake. (*An armed French convoy brings in YEGOR. VANYA runs alongside.*)

VANYA: Let go my grandfather . . .

ONE OF THE CONVOY (*swinging the butt of his musket*): Va t'en, gamin!

RIMBAUD (*coming between them*): Let him be. Don't touch the little lad.

YEGOR (*taking advantage of this, to VANYA*): Run to my daughter in the forest, Vanya.

Tell her I buried outside the threshold

A silver rouble and a pair of boots.

They'll come in handy. . . . They are not much worn. (*The convoy takes YEGOR out. VANYA runs out after them. There is the sound of a squad firing offstage.*)

HENRI: The old man burned the village. That's the reason why He was condemned to die by drum-head court. (*VANYA runs in.*)

VANYA: My grandfather is lying there . . .

RIMBAUD (*patting his head*): Oh, malheureux garçon!

Va t'en, mon pauvre. . . .

VANYA (*breaking away*): Why did you come here, devils? (*He runs out.*)

RIMBAUD: Where do they run?

HENRI: Into the woods as far as they can go.

It's foolish, my Rimbaud.

RIMBAUD: It isn't foolish, Henri . . .

Perhaps I grieve for Italy today

As old men grieve about their long-lost youth. . . . (*Enter a FRENCH OFFICER, then NAPOLEON and his suite.*)

OFFICER: His Majesty! Soldiers, attention!

NAPOLEON: Again from their positions

The foes retire. And we are so near Moscow.

BERTHIER: Kutuzov's reached his end.

NAPOLEON: Ah, the old fox

Out of the northern woods! When will he give me battle? (*He takes out his snuffbox, and goes to RIMBAUD.*)

Well, how are things, Rimbaud? How is your health?

You aren't tired of twenty years of marching?

We're getting older, you and I? . . . You snuff tobacco?

RIMBAUD: Your Majesty, I still prefer dry powder.

NAPOLEON (*laughingly holding out his snuffbox to RIMBAUD*): Who can hold ground against my Grenadiers?

BERTHIER: But still the Russians do not want to fight.

Their whole retreat is strange, and bodes of evil.

NAPOLEON: Of evil? Why?

BERTHIER: At times there happen things

That cannot be explained.

NAPOLEON: What foolishness is this—

That cannot be explained?

BERTHIER: Better to say,

We do not know their natural explanation.

There are times when knowledge comes too late, too late.

Never before in any war have Russians

Retreated for so long. . . . And there is something in it.

MURAT (*falling to a knee*): Your Majesty, no. Do not advance your armies,

Your Majesty. Stop here and fortify.

NAPOLEON: Why this hysteria, and at such a moment?

Murat, what happened? Marshal, you may rise. (*MURAT rises.*) And do not lose your head again. In this attack on Moscow

I do not see the slightest danger. But to stop

When we are near the gates of Moscow? . . . No.

DARU: Your Majesty, this is not near to Moscow . . .

NAPOLÉON: What foolishness is this? We'll do the very thing
We always did in every other place.

I'll lead you into Moscow in two weeks.

What can we meet here that is so unusual?

We signed our peace with Austria in Vienna,

With the Germans in Berlin, and with the Russians

We'll sign in Moscow. Why should we this day

Turn in our tracks? Perhaps, my dear Murat,

Your horse slipped yesterday? And rumor has it

That is an evil omen before battle . . .

You are a brave man, but oftentimes your head

Serves you but as an outer ornament. . . .

(To BERTHIER.)

Come, Neuchâtel, bring me the maps of battle.

Let us examine them again with care.

Berthier remains at Headquarters. Murat,

You lead the vanguard. . . . We advance with dawn! . . .

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE FOUR

The left wing of the Russian army. The forts of Semyonovsk. Dawn. In the background there is a redoubt. The dark silhouettes of cannon and the long shadows of sentries show. The lower part of the redoubt is in the foreground. Facing a line of soldiers at attention is KUTUZOV. Other lines of soldiers are directly behind the first line. BAGRATION is at KUTUZOV's side. Offstage there is the sound of cannon.

KUTUZOV (addressing the SOLDIERS): Well, brothers, now comes battle. We shall stand.

Here we will build a dam to hold the foe,
To save our Russian land, our faith, our truth,
Taking the blows the enemy aims at us.
Fight, as Suvorov's men have fought before you.
I trust the bravery of every Russian soldier.
It has been shown to everyone who breathes on earth.
Again the fatherland depends on you.

BAGRATION: Rest you assured that we will do our duty.

KUTUZOV: I know it, Prince. And may God be with you. (*He embraces BAGRATION, and goes out. BAGRATION remains in the foreground, with VOLKONSKY, and ADJUTANT, and the SOLDIERS serving the cannon. The sounds of explosions come nearer.*)

FIRST SOLDIER: It's starting now.

SECOND SOLDIER: That was our own first cannon shot.

THIRD SOLDIER (*to* FIRST SOLDIER): If I have ever done you evil, please forgive me.

VOLKONSKY: We'll know today if it is really true
That knighthood's dead in Russia.

(*He shouts.*)

Artillerists, to your guns!

BAGRATION (*to* ADJUTANT): Tell Vorontzov to make ready for attack.
We'll meet the French with a hot stream of lead,
And see them home with cold steel bayonets. (*The ADJUTANT goes out.*)

VOLKONSKY (*looking through a field glass*): They're launching their attack . . .

(*He shouts.*)

Attention!

BAGRATION (*in the rising silence, shielding his eyes with his hand to see the advancing French, and speaking to one of the OFFICERS of the battery*): Tell them to light the fuses.

OFFICER: Ready to fire!

GUN SERGEANT: Ready to fire!

BAGRATION (*making a sign with his hand*): Well?

OFFICER: Fire!

(The gun speaks.)

BAGRATION: Are they retreating?

VOLKONSKY: I cannot see for smoke.

Shall I order fire?

BAGRATION: No. Wait till the smoke

Lifts from the field.

(A column of fire rises on the stage. BAGRATION falls.)

VOLKONSKY *(running to him)*: You—live?

BAGRATION: It's nothing. *(He rises with difficulty.)*

The pressure of the air just keeled me over. . . .

Let Vorontzov advance with the bayonets.

VOLKONSKY: You are not wounded? *(He looks at BAGRATION with mistrust.)*

BAGRATION: You worry about nothing.

(SOLDIERS appear, their bayonets fixed, climbing over the redoubt to attack the French. BAGRATION bares his saber, and salutes them.

They are led by an OFFICER with a bared sword. VOLKONSKY climbs over the redoubt with the infantry. For a moment, BAGRATION remains alone. He struggles with pain. VOLKONSKY returns.)

SOLDIERS *(offstage, advancing)*: Hurrah! . . . Hurrah . . .

VOLKONSKY *(pointing to BAGRATION's thigh)*: Where did this blood come from?

BAGRATION: It's someone else's. Don't worry. I'm not hurt. *(He tries to draw VOLKONSKY's attention away from himself, struggling with pain, and weakening with the loss of blood.)*

Who is that general?

VOLKONSKY *(looking through the field glasses)*: On the left flank?

BAGRATION: No, the right,

Where the shrapnel bursts. There, look at his black plume.

It is as dark as mourning. Either he seeks

For death, or he despises death.

VOLKONSKY: Is he

A general on the staff of Barclay de Tolly?

BAGRATION: No, I have never noticed him at Headquarters.

I'll bet you that de Tolly does not know
Who this brave general is.

VOLKONSKY (*looking through the field glasses*): It is de Tolly himself.

BAGRATION (*taking the field glasses from him*): This must be some mistake. . . . (*An ADJUTANT runs in.*)

ADJUTANT: Their cavalry has galloped to the van.

BAGRATION (*still looking through the field glasses*): Let Vorontzov and his infantry return

To the redoubt without giving battle,

And you ride on to Duka. Make it faster.

Tell him to send his regiments

Of cuirassiers to intercept the French. (*The ADJUTANT goes out.*)

Well, Prince, now is the time for your attack.

It must be stronger than the first one was.

It seems to me that it is Marshal Ney

Who leads them on. He is a man of glory.

He never lifted arms in vain before.

Fire!

COMMAND BACKSTAGE: Fire! (*There is a volley.*)

BAGRATION (*to VOLKONSKY*): Look! Bravo! (*He applauds.*)

VOLKONSKY: You applaud

The French?

BAGRATION: I honor men of courage . . .

How they advance before our rain of shrapnell!

To meet them with the strength their heart deserves,

Volkonsky, you move forward with your men.

I don't think Vorontzov can hold them back.

(*VOLKONSKY goes out. Weakened by the loss of blood, BAGRATION slowly sinks to the ground, and lies there alone for some time. Drumbeats approach. The Russian infantry slowly drifts back over the redoubt in retreat. VOLKONSKY and the ADJUTANT appear again. The SOLDIERS fill the place.*)

ADJUTANT: Prince!

VOLKONSKY: Excellency!

ADJUTANT: Get him a surgeon quickly! (*The SOLDIERS lift BAGRATION to carry him out.*)

BAGRATION: No, put me down here. Here on the caisson
So that my soldiers see me as they pass. . . .
No. In this hour I will not leave this place.
I have seen soldiers leaving their redoubts,
But none who ever gave their colors up.
Believe me, never will they yield the body
Of Prince Bagration to any foe.

ADJUTANT: But you are losing blood with every moment.

VOLKONSKY: You will be bandaged, Prince.

ADJUTANT: You will feel better soon.

BAGRATION: Leave me alone here. While my body lies here
There's life and glory in this last redoubt.

(*The blue uniforms of the French appear on the redoubt. They bayonet the Russian gunners. Some Russians run, but seeing BAGRATION lying peacefully on the caisson, they turn in silence and die under the blows of the French.*)

ADJUTANT (*to BAGRATION*): They've reached the fort and taken the battery.

You're losing blood in vain.

BAGRATION: My dear young man,

Please go away and let us part good friends.

(*To VOLKONSKY.*)

Volkonsky, fill that moat with dying Frenchmen.

(*A FRENCH OFFICER climbs to the top of the redoubt.*)

FRENCH OFFICER: A bas les armes!

VOLKONSKY: Follow me, my children.

Give them the bayonet! . . .

RUSSIAN SOLDIERS (*attacking the French and driving them back*):
Hurrah!

BAGRATION: Volkonsky, it is pleasant to die thus . . .

VOLKONSKY: We filled the moat with them.

BAGRATION: I saw. 'Twas time

To do it long ago. Thanks, Prince. You see

The war's not ended, but I end my wars . . .

(Weakly.)

Now to the hospital. . . . No. Stop. There in the field

With the black plume—there stands a general. . . .

(To VOLKONSKY.)

Remember what we saw. I did not know him

At first. But then I saw it was de Tolly.

I've done him wrong. I thought he was a traitor,

And wrote about it to the Emperor. . . .

But I have seen him in the flame of battle—

He's brave and honest. . . . And there's no one now

That dares to call him traitor. I have wronged him.

I did not understand his strategy,

And that is why I wrote to Alexander.

Now let my Adjutant go straight to him

And tell him that Bagration begs his pardon . . .

Prince, what a pity you don't know Georgia.

There is no country sunnier, no clime dearer.

Oh, if I could but see again the sky

Of my dear home . . . *(The SOLDIERS lift BAGRATION to a litter made of crossed muskets. He looks at the SOLDIERS around him.)*

Soldiers! We've fought together, you and I,

We've marched together through the powder smoke.

Give up your life! But never yield your honor

Nor let the foe stay on your native soil. . . . *(He is borne off.)*

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE FIVE

Fili. A peasant's hut where the Russian staff is meeting. KUTUZOV, BARCLAY DE TOLLY, KONOVNITZIN, TOLL, YERMOLOV, RAYEVSKY and VOLKONSKY are in session.

YERMOLOV (*to KUTUZOV*): I heard that we are yielding Moscow without fighting.

KUTUZOV: Have you a fever? Let me feel your pulse. (*He looks around at everybody.*)

Well, gentlemen, shall we begin little by little?

We've waited a full hour for Bennigsen.

YERMOLOV: He said that he was certain to be here.

KUTUZOV: We will begin without him, and continue with him.

You, Mikhail Bogdanovich, will begin.

BARCLAY DE TOLLY: I still remain of the same old opinion,

Though almost no one up to this late date

Has shared it with me. Firmly, none the less,

I think the same way as I did before.

We must retreat. The Hills of Vorobyov

Are not a good position for a battle

Because it's always possible to flank them.

I know myself how more than very dear

The ancient capital is to every Russian heart.

But I'm a soldier first. And even Moscow

Is first and last a simple war position,

And not of prime importance, more's the pity. (*Enter BENNIGSEN.*)

I do not think we can defend the city,

And I propose that we surrender Moscow,

And then retreat to eastward, to Kaluga.

KONOVNITZIN: And having yielded Moscow to the Frenchmen,

To run away? No, that can never be.

YERMOLOV: Permit me, gentlemen! If we admit at present

That this position is worthless for defense,

Then why can't we remember for a moment

Those vast offensives which we have forgotten?

The foe's near Moscow? In that very fact

I see a strengthening of spirit in our armies,

Or has the courage of the Russian soldier

Run out upon the field of Borodino?

How can we ever foresee the final end

Unless we can defend the capital?
Will not the fall of Moscow mean at least
The fall of government? Or will it not show clear
Its weakness to the masses of plebeians?
What will the Liberals say when they have read
Such news? Will not the whole world quake
Upon the hearing of such awful news?
And what will be the European reaction?

(*To BARCLAY DE TOLLY.*)

You, Mikhail Bogdanovich, forgive me.
Though Moscow is no more than a position
To you, to Europe it is all of Russia. . . .
That is the question. And so I propose
To offer battle to Napoleon in the hills.

BENNIGSEN: To yield or not to yield them Moscow? I consider
This whole debate untimely. What is most important
Is to prepare a plan of sudden battle
For the defense of Moscow to our utmost.
Most worthily did Aleksey Petrovich speak
Here in the midst of this important council.
Napoleon has ordered Beauharnais
With half the army to outflank our forces.
I think that what is most important now
Is to remember the most brilliant active facets
Of strategies invented by Suvorov.
The columns of the French sent to outflank us
Advance along bad roads to strike our rear.
We will defeat them one by one in turn,
If we attack the center of Napoleon.
Gentlemen, that is my plan.

DE TOLLY: For such maneuvers
We have no officers.

KONOVNITZIN: We have.

BARCLAY DE TOLLY: Not many.

BENNIGSEN: That is not true.

What is the argument? They have fifty thousand,
We, sixty. And the weight of numbers is ours.

BARCLAY DE TOLLY: Ten thousand is not enough to win.

YERMOLOV: But then we fight beneath the ancient walls
Of Moscow. And if we should weigh that
Then the advantage is not ten thousand,
But fifty.

KONOVNITZIN: It's little enough to say
This is the core of truth. When ancient Moscow
Is right behind the Russian soldier's back,
Our whole arithmetic becomes another.

BENNIGSEN: You're right, my friend, you're right. Where will the
French
Retreat when we think thus as we advance?

RAYEVSKY (*to* VOLKONSKY): Upon my conscience, I'm afraid of
Germans

When Germans pose as Russian patriots.

TOLL: But if it is our fate to surrender Moscow,
Borodino will be considered a defeat.

BARCLAY DE TOLLY: But if we cannot end the battle quickly,
And Beauharnais strikes meanwhile at our rear
And we are forced to fight the Prince behind us
And Bonaparte around us on three sides?

BENNIGSEN: We'll beat them.

RAYEVSKY: He who gives up Moscow without battle
Needs twice the courage the man who fights
And loses Moscow needs. For he, the latter,
Runs much less risk of losing life and head.

BARCLAY DE TOLLY: We must retreat.

BENNIGSEN: That's the only word you know.
I doubt if the Tsar will be too grateful to you.

KUTUZOV: Sirs, by the powers vested in me by the Tsar,
I issue orders calling for retreat.
We can't afford to risk our armaments,
And Russia is much more than only Moscow.

And if we lose our army, we lose Russia.
If we lose Moscow, Russia's still alive.
Whatever may result from the present action
I take upon myself. . . . The enemy tide
That rushes headlong to the ancient east,
Our Moscow must suck up like a great sponge,
And then wreak havoc on his dismembered armies.
If I were looking for my own advantage,
I'd say that Moscow was surrendered at Smolensk
And lost to us.

BARCLAY DE TOLLY: Very often lately
You quote this thought.

KUTUZOV: The proof is weighty.
We do not close our eyes to what it means.
In passing Moscow, we will take the road
To Ryazan. . . .

BARCLAY DE TOLLY: But why the road to Ryazan?
The other road, that leads toward Kaluga
Is better far.

KUTUZOV: Gentlemen, you are free to go.

BENNINGSEN: Where will we stop?

KUTUZOV: That is for me to know.

YERMOLOV: We did not need to ask. There's little enough
In all his answers. They say he sleeps of nights
Upon his sleeve, so that even his pillow
May never know what happens in his head.

KONOVNITZIN: But if his sleeve should know?

YERMOLOV: He understands that,
And while campaigning never doffs his coat. (BARCLAY DE TOLLY,
KONOVNITZIN, *and the other generals go out.* BENNINGSEN *and*
YERMOLOV *stop in the doorway, while TOLL, RAYEVSKY, and*
KUTUZOV *bend over maps on the table.*)

BENNINGSEN (to YERMOLOV): There's no bad without good. It seems
right now
That we must act as follows for our cause.

Barclay de Tolly and Kutuzov must

Be made to see each other often in public. (*He and YERMOLOV go out.*)

TOLL: And do you know exactly, your Excellency,
That the supply trains are on the road to Kaluga?
Have I your orders to tell them where to go?

KUTUZOV: Colonel Toll, remember just one thing.
If it is necessary to issue any orders
Then I shall issue them to you myself.

TOLL: But it will be too late. It is no easy matter
To take the trains from Kaluga to Ryazan.

KUTUZOV: I did not ask for any favors from you.
Don't do a single thing I have not ordered. (*TOLL and RAYEVSKY go out. Enter BENNIGSEN.*)

Why have you come?

BENNIGSEN: Barclay de Tolly asked
That you receive him.

KUTUZOV: Was there no aide-de-camp
That he asked you to come? With all your talents
Have you become an adjutant of Barclay's?
There was a council here . . . I'm getting old . . .
Tell him I cannot see him . . . I am tired.

BENNIGSEN: There are so many officers waiting there with Barclay.
How can I bring him such a curt dismissal
Before so many junior ranks?

KUTUZOV: What can I do?
I am tired and I am old. Is that a sin?
You don't yet understand it. You are young. . . .
When I was young I could do without sleep
For many nights. . . . Tell him I can't receive him
Before those others. It is not worthy of me
To hide my years behind a mask of youth. (*BENNIGSEN goes out.*)
(*To VOLKONSKY.*)

Prince, will you make it your business to remember,
No matter who may come today, tomorrow,
The answer is, "The Field Marshal is asleep."

VOLKONSKY (*respectfully*): How long will the sleep last?

KUTUZOV: The Lord alone knows that. (VOLKONSKY *goes out.*)
Victory or Moscow? Before my fatherland
I am on trial now. I must give answer
For sacrificing Moscow for the victory.
And could there be sacrifice more hard?
I cannot comprehend my own creation . . .
And will the army ever forgive me? Or at this time,
Having lost the last vestiges of support,
Shall I remain alone to the bitter end of things?
The fatherland called me. And without a fear
Did I accept the power and the high command,
Lifting, a shield before the face of the idle monarch,
The trust and faith of all the Russian people.
How will I face the army, meeting in its ranks
A silence and a sadness? Openly as before,
Or with a secret fear? Was it too soon that I
Bared my old breast to Alexander's hatred?
Was it too soon I forgot the slyness of the courtier?
I'm not afraid of the truth when I'm alone.
My conscience tells me plainly that my tools
Were slyness and hypocrisy and shamming.
But I am old, so old. . . . A gray-haired lover of honor
Is not much tempted by a common glory. . . .
And is it written that I be deceived,
Because for the first time I don't deceive?
Will the army still believe, when they taste defeat,
When they see Moscow fall before their eyes,
That I surrender Moscow only because
I do not want to deceive the people's faith?
Will they believe and trust me after that?
How will I lead them, without knowing their will?
And can it be that they prepare an answer—
The destiny they have adjudged de Tolly? . . .
They want to make me friendly with de Tolly,

But it is not so hard to tell just why—
So that the stone aimed fully at his head
Might strike me down upon its ordained flight.
I never bent my head before a bullet
Fired in my face . . . But when on every side,
The spy behind my back, the foe before me . . .
Bagration, Bagration, my friend,
Why, like a youth who first thrusts foot in stirrup,
Did you seek glory in the flame of death? . . .
How will I overcome, alone, so many—
Those enemies as numberless as my thoughts? . . .

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE SIX

Moscow. The Kremlin. The chambers of the Moscow Tsars. Through the windows one can see the towers of the outside walls. Branches of burned trees bend toward the windowpanes. The pale light of an August sun glances at a blackened tower beyond one of the windows.

NAPOLEON and DARU are in the room.

DARU: Your Majesty, the waiting room is full
Of actors from the Comédie Française.

NAPOLEON: Good!

DARU: What shall I tell them?

NAPOLEON: Nothing. Soon I'll go
To see them. Tell me, what has happened
This night, Daru?

DARU: The fire cannot be stopped,
Your Majesty, though we've tried everything.
Twelve Russians had been caught and shot for arson

Before last midnight.

NAPOLEON: What about the food?

DARU: The army is in need of everything.

Today was market day upon the streets,

But not a single truck of provender

Came into town from any villages.

NAPOLEON: And how will you explain this failure?

DARU: Fear of raids.

NAPOLEON: We were supposed to have bread sent to Moscow from Smolensk.

DARU: Yes, but our supplies were captured

Two days ago upon their way to us.

NAPOLEON: So there are Russians in our rear?

DARU: Detachments

Led by Denis Davydov.

NAPOLEON: Who is he?

DARU: I don't know, Majesty. They say

A Hussar, or a Cossack. The order's signed

That we will pay five thousand for his head.

NAPOLEON: That's much too little. Make it ten at least.

The most important thing for us today

Is quiet in the rear. So if you catch him, hang him.

Have you a description of him?

DARU: Yes, your Majesty.

NAPOLEON: Then send it to all detachments in our rear.

Where are the Russians?

DARU: In Tarutin.

NAPOLEON: I do not

Believe it quite. From the Hills of Vorobyov

Kutuzov moved to Ryazan, and yet in spite

Of all our expectations and our spies,

He suddenly appeared around Kaluga.

Not only did we have no news of it, but even

No rumors came. And when he suddenly

Bypassed all Moscow, for a full three days

We did not see a single Russian soldier.

DARU: I have some information from a certain person
That not a single Russian General
Knew of this march . . .

NAPOLEON: The clever, subtle fox!
We searched for him in every place near Moscow
For three full days. All that remains at present
Is that we find him suddenly with all his armies
Perched on my army's rear. . . . Is there more news?

DARU: One of our Grenadiers
Killed a Bavarian whom he caught looting.

NAPOLEON: A Grenadier? Who?

DARU: Rimbaud.

NAPOLEON: Rimbaud! What happened?
Is he arrested?

DARU: Yes. But it is hard to find
The whole truth out. A German General
Came to me with a request that Rimbaud should be shot.

NAPOLEON: So?

DARU: Yes. But what I heard about it
Puts an entirely different face upon the matter.
Your Majesty, when the guards were being changed,
Rimbaud, who was a sentinel, suddenly saw
A hold-up in full progress on the street
Near to some entrance gate. A crowd had gathered.
Rimbaud tried hard to bring a little order,
But a Bavarian insulted the old Grenadier
In matters that impugned his national honor.
So Rimbaud killed him and our city guard
Arrested him together with the looters.
When he was taken, this is what he said:
"The Bavarians have nothing to lose,
And all the looting in the city started
At their insistence, but the shame of it
Falls not upon them, but upon the French."

Yes, if we French had fought the others' looting,
The Russian peasants would not run from us,
And we could even spend the winter here.

NAPOLEON: You're right, Daru. I did not know Rimbaud
Had such a powerful defender.

DARU: Rimbaud is nothing here.
Rimbaud is but one case.

NAPOLEON: But this one case perhaps contains in it
The further march of more important cases.
Daru, what's going on in our army's rear?

DARU: The country's swept by waves of great excitement.
A People's war is growing in our rear.
Fires in villages and night attacks
Exactly as it was in Spain. . . . Judging from reports
I have received, a little earlier—

NAPOLEON: I ought to liberate all the peasants here,
And, letting out the beasts from iron cages,
Create a People's war in my own name.

DARU: Shall I write that order? It is the fruit of genius!

NAPOLEON (*in deep thought*): Wait, Count. We'd better weigh
the pros and cons. . . .

DARU: You acted more than once in that same way
In Italy . . .

NAPOLEON: I just remembered Italy.
But can an Emperor allow himself the leeway
That lies within the power of a general?

DARU: But the people blessed you.

NAPOLEON: That meant very little.
The love of a people is always a caprice
Like any woman's. I avoid the love
Of people, Count. The people, a foolish beast,
Is hungry, and it roars and beats its breast,
But fear of power always stills its lust.
And if the people think a ruler good,
Then is the reign of that sad prince a failure.

Yes, once I let the people love and cherish
Myself, but later changed my politics.
The people is a foolish beast. I've often seen it,
Its back up, tearing Emperors to pieces,
While at the very moment other kings
Walked up its spine to the pinnacle of power.
For that one place cannot remain long vacant.

DARU: Your Majesty, I'm ready to believe you,
And all the more because experience
Has always shown the justice of your words.

NAPOLÉON: At times it seems to me, dear Count Daru,
That I've entrusted you with too much power . . .
And yet I can of course judge of the people
Just as I wish, but if it is of help
In anything, well, I may just as well
Receive a present even from the people.
So write the order, Count. (*He dictates.*)

"In abrogation

Of all the Russian laws that govern peasants,
We grant them full, complete emancipation
In all the parts of Russia held by us.
We shall not imitate barbarian Russian Tsars
Nor their nepotic courtiers in our laws."

Now write another order, Count Daru,
Raising Rimbaud in rank to be a corporal,
Saying we think he was within his rights
In interfering to defend the Russians.
Also that any looters caught red-handed
Be shot on apprehension near the places
Which they have looted, harmed, or destroyed.
And have these orders published in good Russian.
You will be held responsible for the wording. (*He is about to go out,
when BERTHIER rushes into the room.*)

BERTHIER: Your Majesty . . . Forgive me . . .

NAPOLÉON: What has happened?

BERTHIER: The strangest things are taking place on earth.
In the very heart of Paris, General Mallet
Has organized a plot.

NAPOLEON: You're sure you are not dreaming?

BERTHIER: I sleep too little to be given to dreams. (*He gives NAPOLEON a letter.*)

NAPOLEON (*reading the letter*): But General Mallet?!

BERTHIER: Mallet has taken possession of the city of Paris.
He held it a whole day, as you see, and only
In the morning he was arrested and imprisoned.

NAPOLEON (*trying to smile*): You may go, Prince. This is all foolishness. (*BERTHIER goes out. Slowly NAPOLEON sits down in an arm-chair. There is a pause.*)

DARU: Your Majesty, is it your pleasure to continue dictating orders?

NAPOLEON: No, Count Daru. And I
Shall now destroy these documents myself. (*He tears the orders to pieces.*)

We cannot bother with the peasants now.
They'll have to sink or swim without our help.
You see that I cannot afford to winter here,
For in the west those seemingly my friends
Wait for the moment they can be my foes.
I must return to Europe. We ourselves
Need allies to by-pass the present crisis.
Therefore we must not raise unfriendliness
Among the Germans. The Bavarians were right.

DARU: But what are we to do with Rimbaud?

NAPOLEON: Have him shot.

DARU: Your Majesty just said that to your knowledge
Fear masters people. I think that if you act
In Rimbaud's case to please the German Allies,
You will not use that fear to master them,
Rather your sentence will create the effect
Of fear on your own part in the face of events.

NAPOLEON: I have not told you all I think.

DARU: Your pardon. . . .

NAPOLEON: There was a score of Bavarians in the group
Whom Rimbaud stopped when they were looting Russians.
Order them shot together with Rimbaud,
And then the Germans will accept the order. . . .

And have my sentence read to them at once. (*He goes out. DARU
sits down near a table and writes. Enter BESSIÈRES, MURAT, and
NEY through another door.*)

BESSIÈRES: Where is the Emperor, Count?

DARU: He went to see the actors.

BESSIÈRES: Will they act a comedy for us?

DARU: Something like it.

I'll write a prologue for it.

BESSIÈRES (*looking over DARU's shoulder*): What? A death sentence?
All of those pyromaniacs have not been shot?

DARU: No. Listen to me, Bessièrés. This is an order
To have a Grenadier of yours shot on this day.

BESSIÈRES: Whom?

DARU: Rimbaud.

BESSIÈRES: Take care, Daru.

Stop laughing at me. Rimbaud's the best I have.
What did he do?

DARU: He killed a German.

MURAT: I'd order

Thanks given him.

NEY: Does the Emperor deign to fear
His allies?

BESSIÈRES: Is Rimbaud in prison?

DARU: He is.

NEY (*to BESSIÈRES*): Give your Rimbaud to me.

MURAT: Wait, Ney. Bessièrés and I are townsmen,
So he will give his Grenadier to me.

NEY: I asked him for that little favor first.

MURAT: But I am ready to accept the dangerous risk

Before the Emperor. And can you do that?

NEY: If only he could ride as well as fight,
Then you would need him. But he is a foot soldier.

MURAT: Oh, stop arguing, Ney. A man who kills a German
Is by that fact alone astride a horse.

(*To BESSIÈRES.*)

Give him to me.

NEY: Bessières, give him to me.

DARU: Permit me, gentlemen. Debate is out of place,
For execution waits upon Rimbaud today.

NEY: Well, let it wait. He's still alive as yet.

DARU: His Majesty is hard as adamant.

BESSIÈRES: Well, we can get around him somehow.
We Gascons once were said to fool the Devil,
And we can fool a mortal Emperor.

MURAT: Believe me, Count, when we three get together,
And if the fourth one be the rascal Ney,
It will be easier to fool the Emperor
Than drink a toast to him.

BESSIÈRES (*shouting through a door*): Hey there! Bring in Rimbaud!

(*Smilingly, the MARSHALS push DARU out of the room.*)

MURAT: Will you give Rimbaud to me?
You will, Bessières?

BESSIÈRES: I'd like to, on my honor.
But Ney asked first, and you're my friend, Murat.
And so, to satisfy the two of you,
Let Rimbaud choose. . . . And here he is himself. (*An OFFICER OF
THE DAY brings in RIMBAUD, and then leaves.*)

Rimbaud, his Majesty is very angry
At you. My friend, you seem to have forgotten
How Frenchmen who are Frenchmen do their fighting.
You killed one lone Bavarian, when you could
Have just as easily killed two or even three.
And so the Emperor ordered that you be shot.

RIMBAUD: My Marshal . . . No . . .

BESSIÈRES: You don't believe me? What?

RIMBAUD: Until I read the death order myself,
I don't believe you.

BESSIÈRES: Read it then yourself.

RIMBAUD (*reads the order. Then, after pausing*): My Marshal . . .
how? . . . For twenty years I marched

Together with him. Cairo . . . Naples . . . Rome . . .

My Marshal! . . . For twenty years I marched behind him,
To victory behind my Emperor. . . .

My Marshal. . . . Is this you? . . . My Marshal, I'm not dream-
ing? . . .

If they would give me back my saber now,

It would blush red with shame for the Emperor,

And its bright steel would wear a robe of rust

Before your eyes, my Marshal . . . I don't dare believe . . .

When he was just a little general

I gave my life to him. . . . And could I ever think

That this is the vile use he'd make of it? . . .

MURAT: Don't weep, Rimbaud; don't give yourself a heartache,
For we will save you.

NEY: But first control yourself.

One does not bear a grudge against the ladies,

Nor kings, nor emperors, my jolly boy.

BESSIÈRES (*shouting through the door*): I want to see the officer of
the day.

(*To the MARSHALS.*)

To business, gentlemen. Enough of idle talk. (*Enter the OFFICER OF
THE DAY.*)

There are some German soldiers in the guardhouse.

Bring one of them in here. (*The OFFICER OF THE DAY goes out.*)

MURAT: What's on your mind, Bessières?

BESSIÈRES: I'm thinking of a little practical joke . . .

(*To RIMBAUD.*)

A Gascon never cries because of insults,

And ceases to believe in life only a day

After he dies.

MURAT: You speak the truth.

BESSIÈRES (to RIMBAUD): And as for you,
You still have forty years of fight in you.

RIMBAUD: My Marshal, perhaps I still believe in life,
But I have lost my faith in my Emperor. (*The OFFICER OF THE DAY
leads in a BAVARIAN, and goes out. BESSIÈRES pushes RIMBAUD into
a neighboring room.*)

BESSIÈRES: Are you Bavarian?

BAVARIAN: Yes.

BESSIÈRES: You are a brave young fellow.
I want to help you get along in life.
I have decided to include your name
Among my Grenadiers.

BAVARIAN: I'm very grateful to you.

BESSIÈRES: What is your name?

BAVARIAN: Karl Otto Erich Spak.

BESSIÈRES: Hmm. . . . Somewhat long. We have a little custom—
In entering the Guard, the Grenadier
Changes his name, so we, his officers,
Might find it easier to remember it,
And I, a Marshal of France, give the new name.
For instance: Rimbaud. Do you like that name?

BAVARIAN: Oh, very much.

BESSIÈRES: You take it?

BAVARIAN: Yes, and thank you.

BESSIÈRES (*calling loudly*): I want to see the officer of the day.

MURAT (to NEY): When we were young, Bessièrés knew many
tricks.

'Tis not in vain that we are friends. (*Enter the OFFICER OF THE DAY.*)

BESSIÈRES (to the OFFICER): Take this Rimbaud,
And carry out this order instantly. (*He hands him the death sentence.*)

OFFICER OF THE DAY (*after reading the order*): Rimbaud!

BAVARIAN: Rimbaud? That is my name.

OFFICER OF THE DAY: Rimbaud!

BESSIÈRES: Rimbaud.

OFFICER OF THE DAY: Which of the two is Rimbaud, Marshal?

BESSIÈRES: The one who answers. (*The OFFICER OF THE DAY smiles. He understands, and seems to like the joke.*)

OFFICER OF THE DAY: Very interesting.

So this is Rimbaud?

BESSIÈRES: He answers to that name.

OFFICER OF THE DAY: Well, follow me, Rimbaud. (*He and the BAVARIAN go out.*)

MURAT (*to BESSIÈRES*): All men are lucky

Before the hour of destiny and death,

For if we take this case in consideration,

He was a looter. Now he's a Grenadier,

And I am afraid he'll end in Paradise . . .

For all his life the poor man lived a German,

But he will die today Rimbaud, a Frenchman.

NEY: I like that officer of the day. He seems

To be a fellow of the rarest understanding.

If he should pass unscathed through this war

I think that he will wear a general's coat.

BESSIÈRES (*leading in RIMBAUD*): Well, dear Rimbaud, choose either Murat or Ney.

Enter their armies. You must not remain here.

You can be easily noticed by the Emperor.

I do not dare to take a risk like that.

RIMBAUD: I understand you very well, my Marshal,

And I am touched by what you've done for me;

But I am rash enough to ask another favor—

Allow me to return to France, my home,

For I have thought a great deal these five minutes,

And though my hand still has the same old strength,

As far as the Emperor goes—I am dead—I am dead . . .

To serve him is no longer my destiny.

Return my saber and my uniform.

I beg you I may take them home with me.

I marched behind my Emperor twenty years
Wearing that saber and that uniform.

I want to keep them.

BESSIÈRES: My advice is, stay.

But you can think it over.

RIMBAUD: No.

BESSIÈRES: Then you may go. (RIMBAUD *makes a step forward to thank* BESSIÈRES. *Enter* DARU.)

DARU: The Emperor is coming to this room.

BESSIÈRES (*pushing* RIMBAUD *to a door*): We'll get you out in time.

You needn't worry. (*The MARSHALS and RIMBAUD go out. DARU remains alone. There is a pause. Enter* NAPOLEON.)

DARU: Your Majesty, do you desire to be
Alone here? You have no need of me?

NAPOLEON: You may retire, Daru. I'll call you later.

Tell those outside that no one is to see me. (DARU *bows and goes out. NAPOLEON picks up a book, but puts it down almost at once.*)

There'll be no peace. Peace is a fantasy.

And I must act at once. At once. But how?

The man who does not act is in the hands

Of foolish circumstances and caprice.

To sue the Tsar for peace? But so far I've not lost

A single battle to these Russian giants. . . .

This is impossible and almost idiotic,

The play of wild, ironic circumstance.

Moscow is mine. I'll wait until they sue.

But who's victorious at the end of all?

Who? Why, Alexander, the puffed-up seven-foot fool,

The sad grisette coquetting in uniforms.

How easily I could have sicked the peasants

Upon this foolish doll! He would have paid more clearly

Than with a battle for his time-worn Moscow.

And after time had passed, I could have paid him

For peace by sacrificing foolish peasants.

But how much time would go before these plans
Could be matured? That is the crux of the question.
And at this very moment it may be necessary
For me to be in Europe with my army.
In this accursed Moscow conflagration
It seems that I have seen my Empire blazing
To ashes. . . . Or was it but imagination?
Or old-age doubts that come before their time,
And having found a refuge in my heart,
Force me to see defeat in the face of conquest. . . .
I need quick peace. . . . What unaccustomed anguish
Lies in the lap of these inactive days!
The Russians? Asiatics, uncouth Scythians!
How did they dare to set the torch to Moscow,
The ancient city where repose their fathers!
But still there is no peace. To hope for peace is bootless.
But how to leave this place without the loss
Even of the semblance of a victory? . . .
I need that peace . . . (*He claps his hands.*)
You out there, come in! (*Enter DARU.*)
Let Lauriston come in. I will receive him. (*DARU goes out. NAPOLEON
sits down and writes.*)
The conqueror is suing for a peace
In a conquered city. . . . Irony of fate. . . .
(*Enter LAURISTON.*)
LAURISTON: Your Majesty, forgive me . . .
NAPOLEON: Listen, Count.
I called you, having chosen you as envoy
To Field Marshal Kutuzov. He's a sly old man,
But using any means that comes to hand
You'll have to see to it that Alexander
Receives my letter quickly. (*He continues to write.*)
LAURISTON: I'm afraid to call
This duty very pleasant.
NAPOLEON: I see no reason

Why you should think so. I'm in need of peace. (*He gives LAURISTON the letter.*)

And if the Russians do not know our rule
That peace is sought by him who has lost his battles
We shall be forced to remind them very sharply
That it is more than time ambassadors were sent
From the Russian court to wait upon our pleasure.
When the discussion reaches talk of peace
Be not afraid to cede too much, and try to meet
The Russians more than halfway. My men are tired.
They suffered greatly through the whole campaign . . .
Peace. . . Get me peace, no matter what you pay.
Yield everything, but only save our honor.

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE SEVEN

The Russian camp at Tarutin. KUTUZOV's tent. Midday. KUTUZOV is in an unbuttoned uniform coat.

OFFICER OF THE DAY (*at the entrance*): The Marshal is asleep.

(*Enter RAYEVSKY, with a sack in his hands.*)

RAYEVSKY: I have brought you, Excellency,
A little present. (*He puts the sack down.*)

KUTUZOV: I really didn't need it . . .

What do they say in the staff?

RAYEVSKY: If rumors can be trusted

We aren't going to attack?

KUTUZOV: First answer me.

RAYEVSKY: I shall not hide from you that all of them
Are still dissatisfied. They say Barclay de Tolly

Still influences you, that it is strange
That we are yet inactive when our country
Groans underneath Napoleon's sharp heel.
And when they curse Barclay, in the same breath . . .

KUTUZOV: They also mention me?

RAYEVSKY: I shall not hide

That you are often linked together with him. . . .
Shall we attack, Prince? I believe the French
Are not expecting that at the present moment.

KUTUZOV (*lifting the sack*): The present that you brought me is quite heavy.

What have you in this sack?

RAYEVSKY: Your Excellency,

It holds three heavy horseshoes that a Cossack
Removed today from three French cavalry mounts.

KUTUZOV: Horseshoes—for luck? And what did the said Cossack
Find of more interest in the horses?

RAYEVSKY: He's outside.

KUTUZOV: Well, let us have him in. (RAYEVSKY *goes out and returns quickly with a COSSACK.*)

The General just gave me your strange present.

It isn't very much, but still I think

That you have sent me this for some good reason.

COSSACK: Take a good look, your Excellency, how their horses
Are shod.

KUTUZOV: How are they shod?

COSSACK: Not for the winter

Like ours. Just see how foolish they are,
The Frenchmen, Excellency. When the time arrives
And the frosts strike and the roads freeze over,
Their horses will be slipping on the ice.

We have reshod our horses long ago,

But, Excellency, take a gander at these horseshoes. . . . (*He laughs.*)

KUTUZOV: Yes, of a certainty I see these horseshoes
Are worthless for the winter. Here's a rouble

For each of them. (*He gives the COSSACK some coins.*)

COSSACK: Thank you, Excellency.

And if you give the order, we can bring
A thousand like them to you before nightfall.

KUTUZOV: No, Cossack. I don't think I have enough
To pay you for so many. But I thank you
For your fine present. You may go. (*The COSSACK goes out.*)
These soldiers

At times discover things a general
Would never see. All through the breadth of Russia
Most people are like that. (*Enter BENNIGSEN. RAYEVSKY leaves soon after.*)

What is it, Bennigsen?

BENNIGSEN: I have prepared a plan to attack Murat tonight
Which seems to guarantee a victory.

If we succeed in splitting into halves
The vanguard of the French, or surrounding it,
I think the obstacles will not be too great. . . .

(*Enter SIR ROBERT WILSON.*)

WILSON: Excuse me. I shall not be in your way?

KUTUZOV: What do you think of this new plan, Sir Robert?
General Bennigsen wants to launch a drive
Against the French at once.

WILSON: That's wonderful.

KUTUZOV: I wonder very much, Sir Robert, just how often
Your thoughts and Bennigsen's are of the same design?
Two days ago the two of you attacked
Murat, as I remember. But he turned
And fortified himself. I think that this is hardly
The time to strike at him again.

BENNIGSEN: Dear Prince,
I didn't think that you would think that way.

KUTUZOV: I have not thought about it. There's too much to do.
(*He goes out.*)

BENNIGSEN: I think the time is ripe for an attack—

Kutuzov thinks the time is ripe for parleys.

WILSON: We can't allow that. General, I'm uneasy,
He must not see the French ambassador.

BENNINGSEN: We are too late to stop that, but, Sir Robert,
We have a piece of most remarkable news.

Kutuzov and Barclay see eye to eye

So much that I have brought the general staff

To the brink of bursting. The hatred for de Tolly

Is of such strength that now his days are numbered

I think Kutuzov and he will not hold back.

But I'm afraid of one thing. Hate of Barclay

Is so unanimous, and he himself so angry,

That it may be that he requests retirement,

And that might save Kutuzov at this time.

Together with de Tolly they will blame him.

But they'll forgive Kutuzov by himself. (*Reenter KUTUZOV. His coat
is buttoned. It seems he is preparing to receive someone.*)

Will Lauriston call on you, Excellency?

KUTUZOV: I am expecting him at any moment.

BENNINGSEN: Will Alexander find his presence welcome?
I have great doubts of that, your Excellency.

KUTUZOV: Can I, the Emperor's servant, always know
What Alexander likes, what he dislikes?

I will inform the Tsar after the interview,

And he will let me know in his good time.

BENNINGSEN: Long silence is the sign of great disorder.

WILSON: This place is beautiful. Often in the mornings

I walk about here. You have told me, Prince,

That you have less than a hundred thousand men.

Judging by campfires, you must have two hundred.

KUTUZOV (*laughing*): My officer of the day is a clever man.

WILSON: Forgive me, Excellency . . .

KUTUZOV: I ask you to forgive me.

I clean forgot to tell you of the campfires.

If we have nothing else, at least we have

Enough of wood and straw and drying grass. . . .

If you saw ten-score thousand men around,

Count Lauriston will see at least a hundred

And fifty thousand. It was for Lauriston

The fires were lighted. Cleverness is simple,

Yet still it works, I see. Forgive your servant

For not informing you of this beforehand.

I wanted to deceive my enemy,

And I have managed to deceive my friend.

WILSON: Oh, that was really clever.

BENNIGSEN: So you really mean

To see Count Lauriston.

KUTUZOV: I see no evil in it.

I think that some attention should be paid

To what the French ambassador has to say.

BENNIGSEN: And so you will delay attacking now?

KUTUZOV: If need arises, there will be attack.

And by the way, all of the plans you gave me

Are not complete in any of the details.

BENNIGSEN: But all the positions, all the actions are marked . . .

(Enter OFFICER OF THE DAY.)

OFFICER OF THE DAY: Count Lauriston to see you, Excellency.

(WILSON and BENNIGSEN sit down, ready to be present at the interview. The OFFICER OF THE DAY goes out.)

KUTUZOV *(to WILSON)*: I beg you sir, to excuse me very kindly.

It is most proper that you should be present,

But in my hastiness I promised Lauriston

That I would meet him in full privacy.

(WILSON and BENNIGSEN, dissatisfied, go out. LAURISTON comes in.)

LAURISTON: Your Excellency, I am very happy

To see you in good health. Without embellishments,

Let me remark that to see such youthful spirit

Accompanied by the fullness of long years

Is rare these days. Please do not take these words

For empty compliments. Even now I cannot hide
Sincere amazement at the sight of you.

KUTUZOV: Sit down, dear Count. To what am I obliged
For this unearned and pleasant visitation?

LAURISTON: Believe me, Prince, even in the midst of war,
We French are filled with the deepest sympathy
For the Russian people.

KUTUZOV: I am very glad to hear it.

LAURISTON: Then why should we keep on this trial of arms?

KUTUZOV: I am heartbroken that the French refused to show
This sympathy of theirs some three months back.

LAURISTON: But, Excellency, you well know my Emperor
Conducts war like a knight, and always feels
That one great battle settles with decision
Any campaign. You know as well as we do
The cruelties that your peasants practice on us.
We are not always able to hold them back.
His Majesty has asked me to inform you
That it would be for the best for both of us
If you could keep your peasants within bounds.

KUTUZOV: I have no power, dear Count, to conquer nature.
So many years have passed since the Russian people
Have seen upon the fields of their native land
The armaments of foes. It was not blood that soaked
This earth since the invasion of the Tartars
But the sweat and toil of simple Russian ploughmen.
I cannot entertain a reproach like yours.
I hope my armies treat the enemy
In the line of duty only. But can I rip
The patriot's heart out of your bosom, Count?
Well then, how shall I still the rising hatred
That fills my people when they see their homes
Invaded, and the land they love enchained? (*There is a pause.*)

LAURISTON: His Majesty, the Emperor of the French,
Has written a letter to the Russian monarch.

I should be happy to deliver it in person,
But I find it pleasant to ask you for your aid
In having it delivered to your liege.

KUTUZOV: It shall be sent today.

LAURISTON: I think that it would reach
Tsar Alexander faster if the way were straight
From here to Petersburg; but on the way
Lies Moscow. So we have arranged to have
Our lines open to let your messenger
Through with the letter. Before the answer comes—
We hope it will within the next ten days—
We should be happy to declare an armistice.

KUTUZOV: To my great sorrow, I have not the power
To satisfy you, Count. As for the letter,
Even by taking a more winding route,
My Adjutant will deliver it in time.

LAURISTON: I think a cavalryman will deliver it faster.

KUTUZOV: Papers of such importance, meant for monarchs' eyes
Are never sent with simple cavalrymen.

LAURISTON: Farewell, your Excellency. It is hard to say
How happy I have been to spend these moments
With you in pleasant talk.

KUTUZOV: The feeling is mutual, Count.
Your Emperor has done me a great honor
In sending such a subtle envoy. It would be
Hard to conceal my feelings before your eyes.

LAURISTON: Accept, your Excellency, my assurances
Of the great respect in which your name is held. (*He goes out. Enter*
the OFFICER OF THE DAY. It grows darker.)

KUTUZOV: Is Ozharovsky here, and Count Orlov?

OFFICER OF THE DAY: Yes, Excellency.

KUTUZOV: Go and tell them both
To take two regiments each, and bypass Moscow,
Passing into the Frenchman's rear. When they find peasants,
No matter in what place, who want to fight,

They are to give them arms and every aid.
But tell them I forbid the least attempt
To open battle or to launch attack.
They are to help the peasants capture supplies.
That is the only way to beat the French.
If Lauriston is so worried by the peasants,
We should not worry at all about the things they do. . . .
Now tell Volkonsky to come in and see me,
But keep the others out. You'll tell them, as before,
Kutuzov is asleep. (*The OFFICER OF THE DAY goes out. KUTUZOV
bends over a map on the table.*)

Their rear is far away.
I do not know just what has happened there.
But anything that harms the French is good
For us. . . . (*Enter VOLKONSKY.*)

VOLKONSKY: You called me, Excellency?

KUTUZOV: Yes, Prince Volkonsky. . . . Tell me about your horse.
Is it really as good as the others here have said?

VOLKONSKY: There isn't a better one in the whole of the Russian
army.

Shall it be saddled?

KUTUZOV: No. It is better that we spare it.
You will deliver this to Alexander. (*Gives him NAPOLEON's letter.*)
You'll take a letter to him from me as well.
And if your horse is half as good as you say,
Then get another, and a very slow one.
Spare even that horse, and take your time—
We have enough for what the future brings us.
Now do you understand just what I want?

VOLKONSKY: But shouldn't I at least put spurs to horse
On my return to you?

KUTUZOV: Upon my conscience,
I don't expect good news from Alexander.
And in so far as bad news goes, Volkonsky,
I'm never in a hurry to receive it.

Well, Prince, on your way, and a happy journey.
And don't forget to spare the horse you take.

(VOLKONSKY *goes out*, KUTUZOV *accompanying him*. BENNIGSEN
and BARCLAY DE TOLLY *come in through another door*.)

BENNIGSEN: Mikhail Bogdanovich, how can I understand
Such a decision? How, in the midst of war,
When all the plans that you yourself created
Are turned into reality and action,
Suddenly to resign?

BARCLAY DE TOLLY: It's time for me to rest.

BENNIGSEN: I cannot see the sense of your decision.
It is impossible to express in words
The difficulty you have had in being forced
To stand aside and seeing the grain you sowed
Reaped by another.

BARCLAY DE TOLLY: I am tired of it all—
The hidden sarcasms, the intrigues, suspicion . . .
I'd like to run away from all of this.
What happened before, happens now. The old fox
Is able to make me stand aside at will.
It seems that he won't even share my share of glory
With any other person than himself.

BENNIGSEN: Come to my place. Forget the sly old fox.
My house is not so far away from here,
And in my house, and in sincere debate,
You'd change this strange decision in a moment.

BARCLAY DE TOLLY: I do not know if I have been created
For military glory. But for intrigues
I was not made. I'll seek the shade, and let him
End what we started in his personal glory.
The hurt I bear is great, but greater is my honor.
Everything changes . . . life and the generations—
The things we trample in the dust today,
Tomorrow raises from the dead, and brings them
Love and the tears of all-embracing pity. (*Enter KUTUZOV*.)

KUTUZOV (*reading the paper handed him by BARCLAY DE TOLLY*):

You ask retirement. . . . You can always have it.

Why do you ask for it?

BARCLAY DE TOLLY: My illness is my reason.

KUTUZOV: I am chagrined that one whose name is glorious
Can't overcome a little siege of illness.

You spoke to Alexander once in Vilno.

They told me what you said there. And you used

One sentence. Never have I heard a wiser.

"When Russia is in danger, personal hurt

Cannot compare in gravity with that danger."

Did I hear wrong?

BARCLAY DE TOLLY: No. I said that very thing
Almost in the words that you have used just now.

I can't remember exactly what I said.

KUTUZOV: So you've forgotten? But I remember still.

If you've forgotten—good-bye. Your wish is granted.

I will not act against your own desires. (*BARCLAY DE TOLLY bows, and
goes out.*)

It's bad when a man himself can't understand

The truth that he makes plain to all the others.

BENNIGSEN: You've acted rashly, letting Barclay go.
What will the Emperor say?

KUTUZOV: He's far away.

BENNIGSEN: Still, you cannot retire Barclay de Tolly
At your own will.

KUTUZOV: Why should it bother you? . . .

Bennigsen, order all your advance posts
To cease their firing.

BENNIGSEN: What? An armistice?

KUTUZOV: No.

BENNIGSEN: Then, Excellency, what?

KUTUZOV: Simply an order.

BENNIGSEN: But when shall we act?

KUTUZOV: Not at the present.

BENNIGSEN: But Robert Wilson and three Englishmen,
Who came together with him, often of nights
Fight with the French patrols.

KUTUZOV: If it amuses them
I can't forbid it. They are friends and allies.
But that's no reason for you to plead for them.

BENNIGSEN: How long are we to stand being taught a lesson
In valor by the English, who at home
Cry out aloud about our cowardice?
The time for us to act has come again
And yet again.

KUTUZOV: Not as a service, but a favor,
I ask you, Bennigsen, to go back to Kaluga
And take a cure. We'll manage somehow here.

BENNIGSEN: What is my sickness, Prince?

KUTUZOV: They'll find out in Kaluga.

BENNIGSEN: I doubt if Alexander will like that, Prince.

KUTUZOV: I think the Tsar cares for his General's health
As much as I, his servant, do.

BENNIGSEN: Prince, till we meet again . . . (*He goes out. Enter
RAYEVSKY, in excitement.*)

RAYEVSKY: Barclay de Tolly . . .

KUTUZOV: Well?

RAYEVSKY: He's going.

KUTUZOV: I know.
I have retired him from the service today.

RAYEVSKY: A pity. . . . He's a soldier.

KUTUZOV: That's no news to me.
I know it well myself. And thrice as wise
As the entire staff. But to suppress him
Was something it was hard for me to do,
And had I brought him near, our cause would perish.
For foolish rumor had done its very worst
Maligning him and turning men against him.
And now, at midnight, he and I have parted.

With sadness I, and he with grievous hurt.
What could I do? . . . It was the will of God
That in this hour I should remain alone.

RAYEVSKY: You could have killed the soul of dissatisfaction
With the first order for a pitched encounter.

KUTUZOV: Again you switch your thoughts towards attack?

RAYEVSKY: At least . . .

KUTUZOV: That is not my decision.

RAYEVSKY: Have you a doubt of victory?

KUTUZOV: What's in it for us?

No matter how important it might be,
The outcome of the war is more important.
We did attack them just two days ago,
We could attack again if we so wished—
But what's the use of fighting with Murat
Or of defeating Bonaparte's vanguard?
Will that force him to act any the quicker?
This French inaction maybe after all
Is most important to me. For the last two weeks
All that they ate in Moscow was some cat meat.
Napoleon is great. Strategist and politician,
There is no other to compete with him.
But there he sits in Moscow, a rat in a trap,
Desiring to advance, knowing he must retreat,
And so he runs while standing in the Kremlin,
The time his armies lose both men and strength.
And as for us, one regiment, another,
Come up each day. Judge, would it not be foolish
To start attack? (*Enter the OFFICER OF THE DAY.*)

OFFICER OF THE DAY: You have received a report
From the guerrillas.

KUTUZOV: Why in such a hurry?

Bring in the courier. I'll be glad to see him.

I think the news he brings is of importance. (*Enter a COURIER. He hands a letter to KUTUZOV. The first rays of sunlight break into*

the tent. Church bells begin to ring in the distance. KUTUZOV reads the report. GENERALS, OFFICERS, SOLDIERS begin to file into the tent. They are silent, watching KUTUZOV.)

We are informed that just one hour ago

The last French soldier left the streets of Moscow. (*The men in the tent embrace each other. KUTUZOV crosses himself, and the tears flow from his eyes.*)

CURTAIN

ACT FOUR

SCENE EIGHT

A forest. Snow lies on the ground and the tree-branches. Campfires. Near one of these, DAVYDOV, BEDRYAGA, and some Hussars.

DAVYDOV (*reading from a manuscript*): "In vain do others always think

That a Hussar, the son of glory,
Should only love to fight and drink,
Nor ever hark to love's sweet story.
Not always does my heart desire
To hear men groan and see them fight,
But often melts with softer fire,
And in my helmet, gently bright
The doves weave nests and sweetly choir . . ."

BEDRYAGA: Read more.

FIRST HUSSAR: It's dandy.

DAVYDOV: That's the trouble.

She whom I wrote it to asked no more verses.
And then my gelding carried me to battle.
Even my readers sometimes forget to bear
With me. I left the town without my lady.

And passing the little alley where she lived
I saw the flight of steps that led to her
And that will always live in my memory.
She did not look at me from her window,
She didn't even lift the little curtain. (*Enter BEKETOV.*)

BEKETOV: My men have captured one of the French couriers.
They found a letter on him.

DAVYDOV: Let me have it. (*He reads the letter.*)
Can you speak French?

BEKETOV: Pretty well, I think. (*DAVYDOV writes something, sitting on a tree stump.*)

DAVYDOV: The uniform of that courier—go and see
If you can put it on.

BEKETOV: I think it fits me.

DAVYDOV: Then put it on, and take this letter. Bring it
Into Olkhovka, twenty versts from here.
You'll find a battery of French artillery
Is quartered there. Deliver the letter to them
As if it were the order of Marshal Murat.
And take good care this journey is not your last.

BEKETOV: But tell me how to make my return safe.

DAVYDOV: I write them in this letter that their brigade
Is to advance on Frolovo.

BEKETOV: That is clever.

DAVYDOV: And you will lead them there.

BEKETOV: Into your hands.

DAVYDOV: Yes, but you will need your cunning,
So that the French commander might not even
Have cause to recognize you for what you are.
But if he should believe you, and you bring him
To Frolovo, then you can have my word of honor
That in the evening I shall capture you
With the entire artillery brigade.

BEKETOV: It will be done. (*He is about to go out.*)

DAVYDOV: But wait a minute first.

There in that barrel is a drink or two

Left over. (*They all fill their cups.*)

BEDRYAGA: To the Russian soldier's honor!

To the Russian land! To the hour of victory,

That we might bury Napoleon in these snows

As once our ancestors buried Charles of Sweden.

DAVYDOV: Wait with your drinking. I have an added toast.

No, even after us and after many years

Let every foe who steps upon our land

Remain forever buried in its depths. (*He points to the ground with his finger. They drink. BEKETOV salutes and goes out. Enter*

FOMA.)

What's new, Foma?

FOMA: Well, our landowner

Sold wheat and silage to the Frenchies here.

They loaded up their wagons and went off

To carry it to their army.

DAVYDOV: You aren't lying?

FOMA: In the name of the Cross I'm not.

DAVYDOV: Tell the peasants

To tie our Judas with a knotted rope

And bring him here.

FOMA: No, master. I can't do it.

You see, my children they are very little.

DAVYDOV: Are you afraid?

FOMA: Oh, no, it isn't that.

But I don't relish tying up my master.

DAVYDOV: I doubt if the man will ever return.

FOMA: We are children of darkness. What do we ever know?

You'll fight your war, and then you'll disappear,

And then my master will again come home.

Good if he sells me. But suppose he hangs

My body by the heels to the nearest tree?

No, I am ready to fight with a million Frenchmen,

But you can fight with my master, if you will,

Your personal wars. (*He walks aside.*)

DAVYDOV: Bedryaga, tell the Cossacks

To take his master. (*VANYA runs in.*)

Is it the supply train?

VANYA: Supplies! Supplies!

DAVYDOV: Far from here?

VANYA: They're coming

Right over here.

DAVYDOV (*to BEDRYAGA*): Let the men assemble. (*To VANYA.*) Is the convoy big?

VANYA: It's very big. A regiment,
Or maybe two, or maybe even more.

DAVYDOV: It's big, all right. I am afraid that we
Shall not be able to take care of it.

What's in the train?

VANYA: Sheepskin overcoats.

DAVYDOV: We cannot let the overcoats go through.
The convoy is big. Perhaps it's also foolish.
Let's take the risk in the teeth, my little friends.
Bedryaga, this is what you'll have to do.
You will attack them head on from the front
With twenty of the Hussars, not one more,
And when you see in the very midst of battle
The French outnumber you thirty to one,
Turn tail, and run. Are the horses fed and watered?

BEDRYAGA: They are.

DAVYDOV: I think that they won't let you get away
Without trying to pursue you.

BEDRYAGA: Never fear,
I shall be able to escape from them and hide.

DAVYDOV: Draw them to follow you a little further,
And meanwhile I will capture the supplies.
Vasili and Nastya, you remain right here.
And you, Foma, Stepan, be on the watch.
We will return here in a little while.

And if the Frenchmen should by chance come here
In an unlucky hour . . . you have some cartridges?

NASTYA: You needn't worry your head about that.
We'll do the needed things, and do them well.
We'll get along.

STEPAN: I've been a soldier over twenty years.

(DAVYDOV, BEDRYAGA, *the* HUSSARS, and *most of the* PEASANTS go out. NASTYA, FOMA, VASIL, and STEPAN remain.)

VASIL (*to* NASTYA): I see that you are sad. But why, I can't make out . . .

Or do you think you married badly, Nastya?

NASTYA: While there is war we two can be together,
But afterwards we'll go back to our masters . . .

VASIL: Denis Vasilich promised you and me . . .

NASTYA: My master and your master are no pair.
They asked him for you once before, but he
Refused to sell you. He won't sell you now.
You're healthy. . . . Now, if you were but a cripple,
Or lost an arm, he'd sell you fast enough.

VASIL: I see that you are thinking of long life.
We may be dead today. You're thinking of tomorrow.

NASTYA: I may be sinful, Vasya, but I hope
The war goes on and on and never ends.

STEPAN: The Frenchies have no guts for Russian winter.
Apollyon will run? What do you think, Foma?

FOMA: He'll run now, never fear.

NASTYA: Your master is a beast,
And yet I think, after this war is over,
And you have served him both with sweat and blood,
Things will be made a little easier.

FOMA: Perhaps. They used to whip us every Saturday.
Well, now perhaps they'll do it every Thursday. (VANYA *runs in*.)

VANYA: Run! The Polacks!

FOMA: Are there many of them?

VANYA: I couldn't see—but five or six at least.

STEPAN: That's not enough to run from.

(LIACHOWSKI *appears with several POLISH UHLANS.*)

LIACHOWSKI: Take them, soldiers.

STEPAN: Look who is talking! (*The PEASANTS attack the UHLANS.*)

FIRST UHLAN: O holy mother!

FOMA: Fine!

STEPAN (*knocking over a UHLAN*): The first!

NASTYA (*wrestling with a UHLAN*): Well, up against me you are not so much! (*She throws him down. The rest of the UHLANS run.*

The PEASANTS chase LIACHOWSKI.)

Stop, devil's son. Hold on to him, Foma.

FOMA: Get him, Stepan.

STEPAN: He's a slippery devil.

NASTYA: Get on his left, you fool.

STEPAN: Chase him right back to me.

NASTYA: I'll have to take him by myself, I see. (*LIACHOWSKI shoots.*

VASILI sits down on the ground. FOMA and STEPAN catch LIACHOWSKI and tie him up.)

Vasenska!

VASILI: What now?

NASTYA: Are you alive?

VASILI: I am alive.

NASTYA (*weeping*): Vasya!

VASILI: Well, I'm a little wounded, but I live. (*VANYA looks at LIACHOWSKI.*)

But I'm afraid this arm is badly hurt.

You see, I cannot lift it any more.

VANYA: Oh, Auntie Nastya. Grandfather Yegor . . .

He killed him.

NASTYA (*to LIACHOWSKI*): You?

LIACHOWSKI: I don't know anything . . .

FOMA: There is an oak I saw right over in that wood.

VANYA: He killed him . . . he . . . (*FOMA and STEPAN take LIACHOWSKI away.*)

NASTYA: Vasenska, I'm glad.

VASIL: That I'm alive?

NASTYA: Vasili, you are crazy.

Who needs you now that you have only one hand?

VASIL: They'll fix my arm. They'll fix it, Nastya, yes?

NASTYA: You're foolish, Vasya. Don't you want to be
With me together? Your forehead is big enough,
But you are foolish. Don't have that arm healed.
Your master will sell you to mine, and then . . .

VASIL: A woman's cunning, eh? (*Reenter FOMA and STEPAN.*)

STEPAN: It took a little time.

FOMA: Well, I don't envy you a bit, Vasili.
Your woman has been fighting with the Frenchies,
You'll never manage her in your own house.

STEPAN: The wagons are coming, led by our own convoy.
It seems Denis Vasilich took the supply train. (*VANYA runs in.*)

VANYA: A troika, Nastenka . . . a big fat General,
And others with him, and Uncle Denis Vasilich
Are coming here.

(*Enter KUTUZOV, DAVYDOV, BEDRYAGA, RAYEVSKY, YERMOLOV, HUS-
SARS and PEASANTS.*)

DAVYDOV: I'm really amazed.

I didn't know that you were so near here.

KUTUZOV: Perhaps you thought I was Napoleon,
And wanted to capture me without any risk.

VANYA (*to BEDRYAGA*): Who is this grandfather?

BEDRYAGA: Kutuzov.

VOICES: He himself.

FOMA (*to BEDRYAGA*): The one with the feather?

BEDRYAGA: No, the one in front.

KUTUZOV (*pointing to PEASANTS*): And who are these?

DAVYDOV: These are my soldiers,
Their faces and hands a little grimy,
But, Excellency, I have led them forward
Not to parades, but into secret battle.
And not a foe escaped those grimy hands.

KUTUZOV: You have a lot of them?

DAVYDOV: I'm sorry, I don't know.

But every Russian in the neighborhood,
Your Excellency, was a soldier in my army.
We have captured more than two thousand of the French,
Forty supply trains, five regimental flags,
And letters both from Ney and from Murat.
Some we sent on to the people they were addressed to,
But with the Marshals' names in my handwriting.

KUTUZOV: Good, my Denis. And here beside your campfire,
You did not dream at times of a Marshal's baton?

DAVYDOV: But why, your Excellency, should I dream of it,
When I carry a Marshal's baton in my pocket? (*He takes a baton
out of the pocket of his half-coat.*)

RAYEVSKY: The baton of Davout.

DAVYDOV: He parted with it
Three days ago when he escaped in battle.
Believe it or not, but with this very baton
My Cossacks mixed the borsch in their field kettles.

KUTUZOV (*to the PEASANTS*): Thank you, good peasants. If you had
not helped us
In your own way to drive away the Frenchmen,
From this good earth of our dear fatherland,
I should not have been able to take care of them.

FOMA: It's nothing, Fatherkin. If a midnight thief
Crept in your yard and started stealing chickens,
You'd take a pole and chase him out of there.
Well, we're like that.

KUTUZOV: My heart is deeply touched
By all your help, good people. I am grateful.
I'll tell the Tsar about your bravery.
I think that you will be rewarded for it.

FOMA (*pointing to DAVYDOV*): Tell them about him, but not
about us.
The quieter the better . . .

KUTUZOV: Are the French near here?

VANYA: No, Grandfather. If you should ride straight out, Directly from here, it would be ten versts with a tail.

FOMA: Hush, youngling. Stop your yawping now.

DAVYDOV: The French are twenty versts away from here.

KUTUZOV (to VANYA): Then which of you has made the true report, He, or perhaps you? I still can't understand Where I can find the Frenchmen that I seek.

VANYA: Well, Grandfather, I only learned to count As far as ten.

KUTUZOV: Well, you will get along.

(To VOLKONSKY.) Tell them to mount.

DAVYDOV (to BEDRYAGA): It's time for us to go And help Andrey out now. Let my detachments hurry Over to Frolovo. It would be hard for us alone. (BEDRYAGA and the PEASANTS go out.)

KUTUZOV (to RAYEVSKY): Rayevsky, have them all get ready now. The infantry is to pursue the French.

RAYEVSKY: The men are tired. They should have their rest.

KUTUZOV: You'll overtake the foe, and rest in battle. I pity the soldiers no less than you, believe me.

YERMOLOV: You have decided, I see, to capture Napoleon now.

KUTUZOV: I do not know. But today I know That I have ordered a general advance. Whether we capture him or not, the good Lord knows; But that I'll drive him out of here, I know. (The RUSSIANS go out. The evening passes into night. The moon rises above the trees. A small detachment of the FRENCH comes out of the woods. They can hardly walk. Among them are NEY, LAURISTON, and HENRI. HENRI, completely exhausted, sinks into the snow near the embers of the campfire.)

LAURISTON: The Russians are near here. Marshal, we've lost our way. Capture or death awaits us.

NEY: Fate never yet has forced me to surrender, And I have perished more than once before.

What lies before us?

LAURISTON: A river. The ice looks danger-thin.

The water is hardly covered with a crust.

NEY: I'll be the first to step upon that ice.

Let all the others follow me, one by one. (*He goes out, followed by*

LAURISTON and the others. Only HENRI remains.)

HENRI: I have no strength to walk. Comrades, farewell!

No. It is terrible to die alone.

Hey, somebody! I need a little help.

A single bullet . . . where are you? . . . they are gone . . . (*There is a pause. The last of the FRENCH are gone. After a while RIMBAUD wanders in.*)

Rimbaud . . . well, now I know that I am dead,

For I behold dead men moving around me . . .

RIMBAUD (*coming nearer to him*): No. I'm alive.

HENRI: Alive? You lie, or you have lost your head.

Rimbaud was shot beneath the walls of Moscow.

RIMBAUD: No.

HENRI: He was my friend.

RIMBAUD: He still lives, Henri.

HENRI: If he is still alive and has come here,

In this one hour chosen of all the hours,

He'd do a friendly deed for me at the last.

RIMBAUD: He would throw wood upon the dying campfire

And rub your frozen body back to life.

I'll do it.

HENRI: No. Too late. Not that . . .

RIMBAUD: How can I help you?

HENRI: Oh, if I could reach

My pistol with the frozen fingers of my hand,

I would not ask for anybody else

To help me out. But God Himself can see . . .

RIMBAUD: No, Henri, no.

HENRI: Yes. Only Rimbaud could ever do it.

Why in all Hell did they ever bring us here?

I'll tell you the naked truth—it can't be borne,
 And death is slow-footed as it nears my heart.
 But if you are Rimbaud, and if under the shrapnel
 Of Friedland I ever saved you from the fire,
 And if beneath the uniform I wear
 There's still the bullet scar that was intended
 For you upon that fateful day, and if
 There's still alive the spirit of friendship between us,
 That friendship, which it is a shame to run from,
 That friendship, you remember, which in Cairo
 Divided a sip of water between us more than once . . .
 Rimbaud . . . Rimbaud . . . All the bullets in the world
 Flew at us on the battlefields of earth.
 It is very cold, Rimbaud. . . . The time to suffer is short.
 If I could only move my hand about!
 Only my brain lives . . . and feels the rising frost
 Mounting its slow and cruel upward way . . .
 But if you are Rimbaud . . . my boyhood friend . . .
 I see you carry on you a Turkish pistol,
 The present I gave to my old comrade-in-arms.
 And if you are Rimbaud, then for the sake of love
 And for the sake of pity, and in the name of friendship—
 Kill me . . . I beg you, kill me. . . . Kill me . . . (*With a swift
 movement, RIMBAUD cocks his pistol and shoots point blank at
 HENRI.*)

RIMBAUD: I was your friend. I was your brother-in-arms.
 You know that, Henri . . . it is not my fault . . .
 Napoleon the Great, upon your head be this—
 The blood of all your enemies and your soldiers! . . .

CURTAIN

ACT FOUR

SCENE NINE

The village of Smorgon, on the road between the Beresina and Vilno. A large spacious room in a mansion with a glassed-in terrace that faces the road. Beyond the glass of the terrace the wind bends the snow-covered trees. It is cold in the room. Those inside try to get as near the fireplace as they can, and at the same time retain their places near the table. All of them are tired, all long unshaven. Only BESSIÈRES is, in contradistinction to the others, well uniformed and clean shaven. NAPOLEON, his hands clasped behind him, walks up and down the room, occasionally stopping before one or another of those present. BESSIÈRES and DARU are playing chess. Among those present are MURAT, BERTHIER, and an OFFICER OF THE DAY.

NAPOLEON: There's no more army. The total of all mistakes
Has been written, gentlemen. And I shall not explain it.
All measures successful elsewhere proved mistakes
And unsuccessful when we used them here.
I am inclined to think that the Russian army
Will not stop at Kovno, but proceed to advance.

DARU (*interrupting his play at the chessboard*): Your Majesty,
may it not happen that even now
We are mistaken?

NAPOLEON: What of it? It is natural
That one mistake always follows another.

DARU: I said what I have said because I know
The Russians have no reason to pursue us.
It has no sense for them to continue war
For the sake of England. In the end of things
Why should they die to save the London tradesmen?

MURAT: But Alexander helped them.

BERTHIER: In the beginning
Because he was so young.

DARU: But, strictly speaking,
I do not think that at present the Russian Tsar
Can be so easily bought by the Englishmen.

BESSIÈRES: He's angry at us.

DARU: That plays no part with him.
He understands the cost of the war himself.

NAPOLEON: Those whom we once considered simpletons
We now acknowledge to be immortal Nestors.
Having met Alexander twice I was not moved
To wonder by the subtlety of his brain,
Although at present all of you about me
Find first-class matter in the head of the Tsar.
You have explained quite logically, Count,
The disadvantage of this war for Russia.
All I can do is grieve in the name of Russia
And in my own that you are not the Tsar.

DARU: Will he make war to hurt himself?

NAPOLEON: And freely.

If I were certain that you are correct,
I would not leave for France, as I am doing.

(Those present are thunderstruck.)

BERTHIER (*hysterically*): You—you are leaving us?

NAPOLEON: Berthier, shall I send for water?

BERTHIER (*as before*): I will not stay here.

NAPOLEON: Berthier, you are the oldest of my Marshals.
I knew that as a Marshal you weren't much,
But hid the knowledge from you, loving you.
Why did you betray yourself so foolishly?
I must return to France. I cannot make another
Decision, gentlemen. The road that leads to Vilno
Is open to you. We've crossed Beresina.
I've done all that I could. And all that any of you
Can do here is to imitate Berthier,
Reproaching me with my ignoble conduct.
Young ladies love the souls of noble men,

But politicians still prefer sane brains.

MURAT: But to abandon the army?

NAPOLEON: It is less important

To save its remnants than to recruit new armies

In France itself. Up to this very day

Peace has been weak in Europe. War is near.

I think that it is just at the present moment

That London and Vienna will decide

That I being weakened by many losses

Will not be able to defend myself,

And that their moment of action has arrived.

That is the reason for my present departure.

The man who does not sacrifice small things

Never knows well the value of the great.

I now appoint Murat Commander-in-Chief.

In Vilno you will recommission your men

And give them needed rest.

MURAT: I'm sorry, Majesty,

Russians have infiltrated everywhere.

I don't know if the city will hold out.

NAPOLEON: You were a brave man in your youth, Murat.

You'll take a bath and shave yourself in Vilno. (*DARU returns to the chessboard. A song is heard under the windows.*)

The Song

Let all the blowhards

Fight in the line.

We have found gladness,

No longer we pine

For lovely young ladies

And old vintage wine . . .

NAPOLEON: I want that shouter brought into this room.

(*The OFFICER OF THE DAY goes out.*)

They were an army once, this pitiful mob.

(*The OFFICER OF THE DAY brings in RIMBAUD.*)

Rimbaud! I will not hide I am surprised.

How did you manage to save your life, my soldier?

RIMBAUD: Your Majesty, the two of us were born
Under the influence of a lucky star.

NAPOLEON: I don't think so. Where were you? Have you been
With the Guards till now?

RIMBAUD: No. I left two weeks
Before you did.

NAPOLEON: You lie in your teeth, canaille.
Then you and I could never have met again.

RIMBAUD: Your Majesty, you moved so very quickly
That you have caught up with me, as you see.

NAPOLEON: You dare to insult me?

RIMBAUD: God save the mark!

OFFICER OF THE DAY: Your Majesty.

NAPOLEON: Yes.

OFFICER OF THE DAY: The horses have been harnessed.

NAPOLEON: So you insult me, Rimbaud. I have a fear
That no magician will save your skin this time.

RIMBAUD: If I had any thoughts about salvation
I'd be the first to order horses harnessed.

NAPOLEON: Scoundrel! But devil take it, you are clever.
Here is an example you could take, Berthier.

Well, then, Rimbaud, if you have not died yet

I'm even glad. Listen to me, Bessières.

Rimbaud looks like a man of brains and courage.

I am surprised he is not yet a corporal,

And so I ask you to promote him now.

I think I was too hasty with him in the Kremlin.

BESSIÈRES: Your Majesty, believe me, I interpreted
Your action at that time in this very light
When I prevented his being shot in Moscow.

NAPOLEON: So it was you who saved him? Dear Bessières,
I did not know that you were full of jests.
When you arrive in Paris, please remember—

Under arrest for fifteen days and nights.

Marshals, farewell. (*He goes out, followed by RIMBAUD.*)

MURAT (*to BESSIÈRES, who has returned to his chess game*): My friend Bessières is hurt.

Why did you tell him yourself?

BESSIÈRES: The devil take it!

To be in Paris now, I would gladly

Suffer arrest for twice those fifteen days.

MURAT: You're right, Bessières. Why did I ever follow

This madman here? I could have been a king

In Naples. For to tell you all the truth,

I have seen this madness come on him before.

Oh, he himself is always very careful

About his own white skin. He ran. I am the fool.

NEY: Your Majesty, you speak, may I remind you,
Of the Emperor.

MURAT: Of no one else but him!

NEY: How do you dare? You are his own creation.
You should be shamed to stutter such ideas.

To whom if not to this imperial madman

Do you owe your own most royal appellation?

MURAT: It may be so. And yet I dare to think

That he is not entirely sane and normal.

I would not say a single word about it,

But it is noticeable even in little things.

First, to condemn Rimbaud to execution.

For what? For killing a Bavarian lout.

Then to promote him when he merited

A death sentence. No, not one of us

Would ever act so. He has lost his reason.

DARU: Your Majesty, I'm afraid that you're—not right.

To the Emperor both you and he and I

Are pawns on the chessboard of his destiny.

He puts us where and when it pleases him.

He's heartless, but he's very, very clever.

He wanted Rimbaud shot, not for the Bavarians' sake,
But to retain the Germans as his allies.
Now that he knows his allies have betrayed him
He must rely upon his Grenadiers.
And that is why he made Rimbaud a corporal.
You're just in crying not a single one
Of you would act that way. Rimbaud will tell
His ancient friends how he became a corporal.
Rumors will rise that the Emperor is kind,
That he rewards the well-imagined phrase
Even if it be saucy. . . . Rimbaud will be happy
To risk his life for him on the new fields of battle.
He has deserted us—we all know why.
What use to him in all reality
The dreary sight of sadness in our eyes
When a new project ripens in his soul?
Who ever thinks about the wooden chessmen
When Fate cries checkmate in the game in hand?
(*He sweeps the chessmen from the board with his hand.*)

CURTAIN

ACT FIVE

SCENE TEN

The Palace at Vilno. The same scene as in Act One, Scene One, but now snow is falling outside the windows. KUTUZOV and WILSON are in the room.

WILSON: Permit me, Excellency, for a moment at least,
To speak to you.

KUTUZOV: I listen to you, sir.

WILSON: Rumor's afloat, dear Prince, and it may be

That it has very little truth in it.
They say your Excellency is inclined to think
The war is ended with Napoleon's retreat
Beyond the Niemen. I should be much grieved
If it were so. Napoleon should not escape,
But suffer capture here—a possibility,
I must confess in all sincerity,
That is of interest to many parties.
And then the war would really be won.
But if he should escape, then, I must warn you,
Your Emperor and we will still continue war.

KUTUZOV: Excuse me, sir, I think it pleased my master
To express the thought that war would be continued
Until there was not left a single Frenchman
Upon our soil. This time is not far off.
But till this present moment my Emperor
Has never said that he would end the war
When Bonaparte is captured and imprisoned.
It would not be a bad thing if that happened
But without great losses.

WILSON: Prince, what do you fear?
To fear a few more casualties so much
It turns you from the paths of that great glory
Which waits you with laurels you have earned?

KUTUZOV: All useless glory is a form of vain pride.
As for the capture of Napoleon,
It is not we who need it, begging your leave,
But another power of whose name we know
Whose royal journeys on the Seven Seas
Make even its name an echo of great terror . . .
And if Napoleon should fall at last,
No power on earth could ever deal with it.
Then let him now conduct his swift retreat
Home to his France, accompanied by shame.
And if there's someone wants to war with him,

While there is still artillery and foot,
Why, they can fight him. And Sir Robert Wilson
Is well aware none spill their blood in vain.
We've had an English Commissioner with our staff.
If it is necessary we will send a Russian
To visit the English staff . . .

WILSON: I want the efforts
Of your armies . . .

KUTUZOV (*cutting in on him*): There are many want just that.
But please keep all your wishes far away,
Apart from all my soldiers. (*He rises.*)

WILSON: You alone,
Your Excellency, entertain these views.
Your staff's against you, and your Emperor.
This war won't end your way.

KUTUZOV: We'll see what we shall see.

WILSON: And it will cost you more.

(*He drops his pipe from his mouth.*)

KUTUZOV: You've bitten off
The mouthpiece of your pipe, Sir Robert.

WILSON: That is nothing . . .

KUTUZOV: Until the present I have never noticed
That English mouthpieces are so very weak.

WILSON: No, Prince. It is that English teeth are strong.

(*KUTUZOV goes out. Enter ALEXANDER.*)

ALEXANDER: I have heard everything, Sir Robert Wilson.
You were unable to give me any help.
You do not know to what a pitch he maddened
My mind with letters. It is all his fault.

WILSON: Perhaps it's only that he's slow and old.

ALEXANDER: No, no. It is not that which is at fault.
He was so happy that at last he found
An opportunity to treat me as he did,
And he has judged down to the very smallest detail
That I can do exactly nothing to him.

Field Marshal Kutuzov

WILSON: It was much easier to defeat Napoleon,
Your Majesty, than budge the Prince. Kutuzov
Has never wanted to capture Bonaparte
Even before.

ALEXANDER: It's true, yet, none the less,
Today I must reward him for his service.
My good Sir Robert, you and I, we know
The truth. . . . But the nation does not know it,
And in the people's eyes he is a hero.
And there are times when even Emperors
Must bend their actions to their people's wish.
You see that I can do no otherwise.
I am ashamed, sir. . . . In a little while
You'll be an eyewitness and serve as judge
How those men are rewarded who perhaps
Deserve court martial for their senseless actions . . .
And so, I personally ask you not to come
To see the ceremony where the highest order
Of all my Empire will be given Kutuzov . . .
Alas, my friend, in all the wide, wide world
There's no one free to act as he desires.

WILSON: Your Majesty, there is no gold that can repay
Your kindness. . . . Kings have often rewarded
Their subjects with riches and with coronets.
But pure sincerity has seldom till this day
Been present in the sum of regal gifts.
May I then, taking the example you have set me,
Ask you, although it was not ever custom
To question kings . . .

ALEXANDER: You may ask your question, sir.

WILSON: Your Majesty, is this the end of the war?

ALEXANDER: Oh, no, Sir Robert. You have my assurance.
I say it. No. Controlled by common wishes,
I will not sheathe my sword while Bonaparte
Kings it in Europe. Until my banners move

Through the streets of Paris and the heart of France.
That long-desired peace which Europe longs for
Is overdue for many generations.

WILSON: How nobly spoken! And with what correctness
Your Majesty has judged the situation.

How happy I am to be able to utter "Thank you!"

From all of Europe to the Russian Tsar. (*He bows. ALEXANDER takes his arm, and goes out with him through a door near which a LIFE GUARD stands at stiff attention. Through a door on the other side of the room enter KUTUZOV and DAVYDOV.*)

DAVYDOV: Your Excellency, I am being court-martialed today.

KUTUZOV: What are you saying? I didn't know about it!
Why are they trying you?

DAVYDOV: I took the town of Rovno.
I thought that I should be rewarded for it.
Well, so that I might not be so immodest,
They ordered I be tried.

KUTUZOV: But tried for what?
There's something here I cannot understand.
It was a hero's deed. What is the reason for trial?

DAVYDOV: Three generals approached the unlucky town
With all their armies. The senior man in rank
Was to occupy the town. But they began debate,
For all the three were each a major-general.
They spent two days before the city's gates
And argued which of them should enter first.
Well, at that time I was ignorant of the fact
That three of our great generals debated . . .
The devil prompted me to enter Rovno
From another side, and occupy the city
With a hundred Hussars. And so I am to face
A trial called by these three major-generals.
And I have not the slightest doubt on earth
That I shall get a month in the guardhouse
For my heroic deed.

KUTUZOV (*laughing*): You'll kill me laughing yet!

DAVYDOV: I am afraid they'll make it a full season.

So save me, Prince.

KUTUZOV: But how?

DAVYDOV: Advance me in my rank.

KUTUZOV: To what rank shall I raise you?

DAVYDOV: Major-general.

Then I could judge myself together with them.

KUTUZOV: Well, you are clever enough . . . I like your humor.

(GENERALS, OFFICERS, COURTIERS *in uniform, begin to drift into the room until it is filled.*)

It's true I see you have not been rewarded.

No one has asked the Tsar for your reward?

DAVYDOV: According to the rules and regulations

The asking must be done by my superior.

KUTUZOV: Why did he not?

DAVYDOV: I was my own superior.

KUTUZOV: Well, that is a reason that you have invented.

You should have recommended your own promotion

Plus a St. George for your heroic deeds.

And you will get them. . . . Loving you, I tell you

That everybody here fights for himself. (*He looks around.*)

I see the crowd is here already, and waiting.

DAVYDOV: I never saw these men on the field of battle.

KUTUZOV: That's true, Denis . . . I think I shall move forward.

(*Enter the OFFICER OF THE DAY.*)

OFFICER OF THE DAY: His Majesty!

VOICES: The Emperor of the Russias! (*Enter ALEXANDER.*)

ALEXANDER (*embracing KUTUZOV*): Oh, Prince! We did not hide our vast delight

When you so bravely drove the enemy out.

With the sincerity which was always ours,

We are happy indeed, for all that you have done

To give you thanks. In all the realm of Russia

There's no reward more worthy. For our great victory . . . (*He takes*

the Star of Saint George of the First Degree from a cushion held by one of the attending OFFICERS, and pins it to KUTUZOV's breast.)

Let it emblazon his victorious breast

Who is great in deed and in adversity strong.

Oh, Prince, how often the murmur of amazement

Told us of your attainments and your acts.

It is not only Russia, it is Europe

That in your person sees its liberator.

KUTUZOV (*overwhelmed by the last words of ALEXANDER, but quickly recovering himself*): Your Majesty. I doubt if I deserve

Your kindness. But your gratitude should go

Not to myself, but to the glorious army,

The glorious army of the Russian soldiers.

I helped them with the modest strength I had

To drive the enemy out of our native land.

Your Majesty, no longer now his foot

Treads on the golden wheat of Russian fields.

Merchants and tillers of soil came to our aid,

And young and old took to the sword and saddle.

You have been kind to call me liberator

Of Europe, your Majesty. Least of all do I

Deserve that title.

ALEXANDER: Then, with your glorious arms

You'll conquer it in the future, Prince Kutuzov.

Isn't that true, Prince? (KUTUZOV *is silent*.)

For when we liberate

The rest of mankind from the evil tyrant,

More than a single monarch or one nation

Will thank you, Prince. (KUTUZOV *is silent*.)

But this is very strange.

Prince, you are silent? (KUTUZOV *is silent*. *With each succeeding phrase of the EMPEROR, KUTUZOV's head sinks lower and lower.*)

What is this I see?

Is it that you have no desire to see

The tears of Paris the impertinent

Put out the fires that burned the whole of Moscow? (*There is a pause.*

KUTUZOV *is silent.*)

And now we will continue war, concluding treaties

With the English King and the Austrian Emperor.

Is it not true that, with the smallest of risks,

We'll win the war for good, your Excellency? (KUTUZOV *is silent.*)

Or is it that you are not very willing

To lead your armies to new victories

Over the roads that you've trodden so well? (KUTUZOV *is silent.*)

And what are we supposed to see in your silence?

KUTUZOV (*without lifting his head*): We are always silent in the presence of law.

And, Majesty, the word you utter is law.

CURTAIN

ACT FIVE

SCENE ELEVEN

Bunzlau, a small town in German Silesia. A clean little room in which bottles and medicaments are strewn in some disorder. On a wide bed, under a blanket, but still in his coat, which according to ancient tradition he has never removed during the progress of a campaign, lies the FIELD MARSHAL of the Russian Armies. His eyes are closed. At a respectful distance from the bed stand TSAR ALEXANDER and a DOCTOR, talking sotto voce. One step behind the EMPEROR stand two ADJUTANTS. Out of the windows can be seen the signs of early spring.

ALEXANDER: And is it finished?

DOCTOR: An hour or two, no more,

He will live. The Prince is much too old.

ALEXANDER: This is an unexpected blow to all of Russia.

Good Lord! You say there isn't any hope?

DOCTOR: It isn't hard to fight a common cold,

Your Majesty, but old age is an illness

No one can cure.

ALEXANDER: Oh, God, what a loss this is,
A loss that none of us can ever repair. (*To an ADJUTANT.*)
Gallop to Petersburg. Let Bennigsen come here
To Bunzlau to take over the command.

ADJUTANT: Your Majesty, here? In Bunzlau?

ALEXANDER: Yes, in Bunzlau. (*The ADJUTANT goes out. To the DOCTOR.*)

Doctor, the Prince called for me. But it is not always
That one should come to visit a sick man.
Perhaps I should not talk with him today.

DOCTOR: Your Majesty, everything is possible
To him who is beyond all human help.

(ALEXANDER *walks over to KUTUZOV's bed.*)

ALEXANDER: They told me, Prince, you called me here.

KUTUZOV (*opening his eyes*): I did.

Your Majesty, I am very grateful to you
That you have come to bid farewell to me.

ALEXANDER: Prince, how can I serve in this dark hour of mine?

KUTUZOV (*lifting himself to an elbow, and looking around the room*): Please go, and leave the two of us alone.

I want to speak to the Emperor of the Russias. (*DOCTOR goes out.*)
Sit down, your Majesty.

ALEXANDER (*sitting down*): But is it possible
For you to speak now, Prince?

KUTUZOV: I am strong enough to speak . . .
I have had the last sacrament administered.
The only debt I owe is to your Majesty.

ALEXANDER: I am myself the debtor of your last act of will.

KUTUZOV: Your Majesty, recall Barclay de Tolly
And let him be appointed in my stead.
The stupid rumors and the official hatred
That have been his portion have not been deserved.

ALEXANDER: I'm glad to hear that, Prince. And I will do it, believe
me.

Your wish is my command. I am sorry myself

That he is not with us.

KUTUZOV: Thank you. And now
The things I feel I must impart to you
Perhaps are somewhat out of time and place,
But in the hour when my soul is destined
To stand before a Throne greater than yours,
Your Majesty, without withholding a word,
I'll say it all . . . (*ALEXANDER moves as if he wished to stop him.*)
Please do not stop me now.

There are many words I have, but little enough of life.
Entrusting me with the fate of the Russian armies,
Your Majesty entrusted me with the fate of Russia,
And you and I will both be held for answer
Before the fatherland that is yours and mine.

ALEXANDER: Prince, what you need is rest, and still more rest.

KUTUZOV: My rest is very near. But have the patience
To listen to your servant this last time.
I want to speak, and I have much to say.
When Bonaparte, losing hold of reason,
Suddenly struck at us with carnage and war,
Your Majesty, how cruelly and justly
He suffered for his criminal attempt!
But when you forced me to command the army
And lead it here, how cruelly you amazed me!
For what? For glory? Wisdom seeks not glory,
But glory always seeks him who is wise.
To drive Napoleon from our fatherland
Was duty, Majesty. But if with evil eyes
Napoleon gazes at the Isle of England
And quarrels with the tradesmen of Great Britain,
It's all to the good. . . . So let them fight it out.
Then, if they can, let them imprison him.
And so in England I was greatly hated
Because the English based their hopes on us . . .
But Russian blood and Russian bayonets
Will never serve the English. They serve Russia . . .

Your Majesty, why have you brought your armies
Upon the bloody battlefields of Europe?

ALEXANDER: But, Prince—

KUTUZOV: Be silent. No, I will not hide
The things about which I was still till now . . .
The peaks of the Alps are red with Russian blood.
What for? What reason for it? What the goal?
How hard it is for me to see it, dying,
In this the very last of all my hours—
The useless waste of the best blood of Russia
On alien fields for the vain sake of glory!
What good can one expect from this campaign?
How far from this the path of my desires!
Where are you leading all these regiments,
My regiments! Return them to the homeland.
Oh, this is hard to bear . . .

ALEXANDER: Prince, you may be right,
But it's too late. How can I tread in the dust
The Holy Alliance? I'm powerless before it.
I cannot sacrifice my sacred honor.

KUTUZOV: Your Majesty, your sacred honor rests
Not here, but in the future of the Russias.
I can implore you . . . I have no right to dictate . . .
You are the Emperor, and I—I am the soldier.
I have said all. . . . As life is weak in me . . .
Then history—the fate of the fatherland—
All—hang on the scepter that you hold so lightly . . .
Farewell, your Majesty . . .

ALEXANDER: Doctor! Where is the doctor?
Field Marshal, will you forgive me?

KUTUZOV: I forgive you.
But Russia, Emperor, Russia will never forgive you. . . .

CURTAIN

THE ORCHARDS OF POLOVCHANSK

A Play in Four Acts

BY LEONID LEONOV

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN

By J. J. ROBBINS



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LEONOV

Leonid Maximovich Leonov was born in 1899 in Moscow, where his grandfather kept a small store in the back streets of the Zaryade section between the Red Square and the river. His father, a self-made poet and journalist, sent the boy to the Moscow Gymnasium and the Moscow University; but before graduating he left to fight against the interventionists in the Civil War.

Leonov then began to write short stories and novels which showed so keen an understanding of the psychological conflict inside the characters that Gorki was led to prophesy: "Leonov will one day sing a song of his own making!"

This prophecy has proved true not merely in Leonov's novels (The Thief, 1927, Soviet River, 1929, Road to the Ocean, 1936, and The Capture of Velikoshumsk, 1944) but also in his plays. His first play, The Badgers (1927—based on an earlier novel), contrasted the lives of two brothers brought up together in the Zaryade section of Moscow but separated by the Revolution, one siding with the Bolsheviks and the other leading reactionary elements that hid like badgers in the forests.

This was followed by a series of rather gloomy plays: Untilovsk (1928—acted under the direction of Stanislavski at the Moscow Art Theatre), giving a grim picture of a backward community in Siberia; A Provincial Story (1928), filled with an atmosphere of betrayal and fear; and The Taming of Badodoshkin (1930), a ruthless portrayal of a vulgar profiteer in the N E P period.

Leonov's later plays, like his novels, showed increasing optimism. Skutarevski (1934), both as a novel and as a play at the Maly Theatre in Moscow, gave a magnificent portrait of an older Russian scientist, entrusted by Lenin with secret researches in an electric institute and carrying on heroically in spite of efforts by his brother-in-law and son to betray his secrets to the enemy. The Orchards of Polovchansk (1938), the play given here, offers an equally optimistic picture of a whole Russian family before the war. The Wolf (1939) dramatized the vigilance of the Russians against enemies without and within. Since the German attack, Leonov has written two excellent war plays: Invasion (1942), in which a heroic Russian doctor and his family help the partisans behind the enemy lines; and Lenushka (1943), in which a Russian peasant girl nurses a dying Red Army tank driver.

H. W. L. D.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

ADRIAN TIMOFEYEVICH MACCAVEYEV, a Sovkhoz director, aged 57

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA, his wife, aged 39

YURI, a doctor, aged 34

VICTOR, an engineer, aged 32

SERGEY, a Red Army Commander, aged 29

VASIL, a Submarine Commander, aged 27

ANATOLY, a boxer, aged 24

MASHA, aged 19

ISSAYKA, aged 18

} children of
Maccaveyev's
first marriage

} children of Maccaveyev's
second marriage

ALEXEY DMITRIEVICH OTSHELNIKOV, a Red Commander, aged 28

IROD ANTONOVICH UNUSS, scientist, aged 45

SOFYA NIKOLAYEVNA RUCHKINA, a teacher, aged 35

PLATON PLATONOVICH STREKOPYTOV, manager, aged 52

DUSSYA, his wife, aged 23

MATVEY FOMICH PYLYAYEV, aged 50

KASPER KASPEROVICH ZHABRO, Maccaveyev's guest, aged 50

A letter carrier, a truckman, a lieutenant (liaison officer), other
guests of Maccaveyev

Time of Action: 1938

Place of Action: Fruit orchards of a Sovkhoz in the Ukraine

THE ORCHARDS OF POLOVCHANSK

ACT ONE

A mansion that once belonged to a nobleman, and in it a large room which is now Maccaveyev's, filled with the remnants of old luxury. One of the walls has been entirely renewed. In three unpainted closets are wax fruits, botanical preparations, and laboratory equipment. On the right a stairway leads to the upper story. On the landing at its first turn is a stuffed, yellowish gray night-bird. Under the stairway near a door leading to a built-in closet, is a counter. Above it hangs a pendulum clock with agricultural placards on either side of it. Beyond the door with colored glass panels the reaches of the orchard show, translucent and colored with autumn. To the left, behind a curtain, are the cot of Issayka and a little table with his instruments. A record player, half taken apart, is on the floor. It is evening, and the heat is intense. All who come in from the outside fan themselves. Aleksandra Ivanovna sits sewing on her husband's jacket. Maccaveyev is in an armchair; his large, rough boots stick out from under his dressing gown.

MACCAVEYEV (*picking up a jug and looking into it*): It soured even in this room. There's top cotton floating in it. (*He dashes the top liquid to the floor, then drinks.*)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Don't drink so much. You will have another attack. Better give it to me.

MACCAVEYEV: The train arrived long ago. Why aren't the children here?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: I asked you more than once to send the horses. They won't haul much water in one evening anyway.

MACCAVEYEV: Impossible, Sasha. My orchards will burn up.

STREKOPYTOV (*sticking his head into the doorway*): Is anybody home?

MACCAVEYEV: Come in. You're just in time.

STREKOPYTOV: Turn the other way, Aleksandra Ivanovna. I look impossibly terrible. (*His shirt is on backward. He looks for something.*) They haven't come home yet, the children? (MACCAVEYEV *motions to him with a finger.*) Why, tell me why, are you tempting me?

MACCAVEYEV: Should I use a lasso to drag you over? What am I, a dragon?

STREKOPYTOV (*smiling*): Well, you seem to have invented something again.

MACCAVEYEV: You are, as they say, the local selfmade wiseacre. And your report . . . (*His habit when excited is to lose the connection between words, and to accompany himself with unusual gestures.*) Death everywhere. The Hungarian plum . . .

STREKOPYTOV: Make yourself a little clearer, Adrian Timofeyevich.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Adrian says that our watering is bad. The young leaf has yellowed; it falls as if this were November.

STREKOPYTOV: The disorder of the universe is to blame. (*He slowly fills his pipe.*) Since the snow melted, we have had only two rains. And neither of them could be called a real rain. Just take a gander at what's going on; the roosters have stopped crowing.

MACCAVEYEV: Water, water . . . barrels . . . dig the earth.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Quieter, Adrian. Someone is sleeping here. Go a little closer to him. You yell as if this were harvest time.

STREKOPYTOV (*in a whisper*): Well, I can reasonably understand this. Water. What am I to do, hypnotize it? We have emptied all of the ponds so that the tadpoles are hiding in the mud. One of our men dropped an ax into a well not long ago. Well, he climbed down to get it. And what do you think he saw there? You will never guess. (*He lights his pipe and lets out a cloud of smoke.*) There lay his ax and around it a dry and cool chamber, if you please. That and nothing else. (*There is a silence.*) I imagine that there's no use waiting for the children now.

MACCAVEYEV (*quietly grasping him by the shoulder*): Did you write the report, Platon Platonovich?

STREKOPYTOV: Whatever made me talk about it? If one were to write it, it should be with corrections, with excuses in nature, in man's

impotence, in accidental circumstance. But let my shoulder go. Take that bench over there, and break that. (*He frees himself, and walks away a bit.*) I see you are regaining your health.

MACCAVEYEV: Be careful with me, I am a little weak now. I've started to get attacks, they say. (*Breaking out of his whisper.*) And if tomorrow, tomorrow . . . as far as the eye can see . . . I won't give a hang if you are a wiseacre. (*STREKOPYTOV looks interrogatively at ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA.*)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Adrian says that if everything is not watered tomorrow, then . . . Then what, Adrian?

MACCAVEYEV: Translate it, translate it for him . . . I will go there myself with the pails, I . . . (*STREKOPYTOV starts to go out.*) He's been drinking again. It is enough to sit near him awhile, and you get drunk yourself.

STREKOPYTOV (*on his way out*): You can no longer differentiate between wine and medicine, my enlightened one. Explain that to him later, Aleksandra Ivanovna. (*He really goes out this time.*)

MACCAVEYEV: There, he says the same thing. Vassily will leave all his oceans, and come here by express, and find me in good health, even in my boots. One shouldn't play with telegrams, Sasha.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: One can give three days in three years to a sick father.

MACCAVEYEV: What am I sick with? Everybody has heart attacks. I knew a child once, and he . . . Eh. (*He makes a gesture with his hand.*) And you took Vasili away from his work. He is on post guarding the sea frontier, and you . . . And perhaps in that very half-minute *they* will come crawling.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Why do you speak only about Vasili? Your other children are also coming home.

MACCAVEYEV: That makes it even worse. Yuri has a special eye for these little tricks. He'll never believe me. Why don't you get some vials from the closet? Dust them off, and pour some colored water in them. (*He rumples his hair.*) Sick men always have unkempt hair. Why are you keeping me here in a box? Do me a favor. Give me a little draft. (*ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA goes to open the windows.*) Sasha,

perhaps I should put a wet rag on my head. I have seen the sick put wet rags on their heads.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Adrian, I wanted to speak to you.

MACCAVEYEV: I noticed it a long time ago. Well, make me happy.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA (*near ISSAYKA's cot*): Issay, are you asleep? (*She pulls aside the curtain. There is no one there.*) He's gone somewhere again. You ought to let him know once for all. He will hurt himself somewhere.

MACCAVEYEV: Let him return, and I will twist his springs. Well, what did you want to say?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA (*quietly from behind him*): Adrian . . . it seems that Matvey is still alive. (MACCAVEYEV *becomes excited, and tries to rise. She holds him back.*) Don't get up. Sit where you are. He sent me a letter. I did not show it to you because I didn't want to excite you. You were in bed then. Here it is.

MACCAVEYEV (*pushing aside her hand*): So it means that *they* did not kill him. That is good, Sasha, good. Well, and what does Matvey write you?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: He writes that he found a job in a trust, as a representative. Here, he describes how he bought fish for them. It is very funny, and in verse. Shall I read it to you? (MACCAVEYEV *is silent.*) He wants to come here. I understand myself that this is no time for his visit, what with the children coming, and he . . . But I don't know his address, and I couldn't warn him. (MACCAVEYEV *feels choked, and opens his dressing-gown.*) It would be best to take Issayka's cot into the closet. It would make things cleaner and more orderly for the guests.

MACCAVEYEV: It's not like Matvey to find fulfillment in fish. There's evil blood in him. It can only mean that they pushed him out of some high place.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Read the letter yourself. It isn't very long. . . . (*Again MACCAVEYEV does not take the letter.*) Make peace with him, Adrian. You are both old men now.

MACCAVEYEV (*pulling her to him by her sleeves*): Sit down here, Sasha. I was always about to ask you, but somehow the minute for it

never came. How did it happen between the two of you . . . Your acquaintance? (*She is silent.*) How young you are yet, how very young!

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Look how my face has broadened out and how dull my eyes have become. (*He caresses her hand.*) It was very simple, Adrian, much simpler than these words. I married you when I was a little girl. I had grown up together with your children. And my sister Nastenka, when she was dying, made me promise never to leave the children. Then you left for the front. And then Matvey came here. It began in the morning, and I thought it would be over in the evening. I was walking on the road and he met me by accident. He stopped his horse and kept following me with his eyes.

MACCAVEYEV: So, you looked back.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: No.

MACCAVEYEV: Then how do you know that he looked back at you?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: I suppose my heart told me that.

MACCAVEYEV: Did he bother you?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: No. He was silent, but he would smile when he met me. He was a happy person, and there was always an air about him. Then, after a half year . . . the Germans were here, and you were in the trenches . . . Matvey broke his way into the house. He was soaked with rain, and there was black blood here, on his face. It was night, and the rain broke in with him. It seemed to me that all our dead, all our comrades were pushing in behind him . . . Where did I leave the thread? . . . I let him in. (*There is a silence.*) Then he was captured by the Germans. All is over, Adrian. I have finished mourning his memory.

MACCAVEYEV: And he took it into his head to return to life after eighteen years.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Don't think about it. There was nothing between us. We looked at each other and went our ways. The first love is never the greatest. (*With new strength.*) But when I think that the same thing may happen to our Masha . . . The same age, the same scent of apples . . .

MACCAVEYEV: Well, we'll take care of Mashenka. (*Gently pushing her away from himself.*) But even I am interested in what Matvey

Pylyayev has become these days. . . . Wait, I think they have arrived. (*There is noise in the orchard. ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA hardly has time to throw open the doors when RUCHKINA and DUSSYA rush in, panting. Both are dressed in holiday attire. DUSSYA is limping. One of her shoe heels is off, and she carries it in a kerchief.*)

RUCHKINA: Dusska, I can't keep up with you. You seem to be on little wheels.

DUSSYA: Darlings, so it means that everybody has been lying to us? Mavra told stories—the Maccaveyev house is full of sons, music is playing, everybody is shouting "Hurrah!" And there is only silence here, and the smell of medicine.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: The music is there. Issayka hasn't put it together yet. They haven't come. The train must be late.

RUCHKINA: Right now the harvest is the first thing on the program. How is your health, Adrian Timofeyevich?

MACCAVEYEV: My health is being undermined by a mysterious worm—old age, Sofya Nikolayevna. But I have not given up hope . . . (*To his wife.*) Give me that portfolio from the counter.

DUSSYA: While we were coming here we saw troops and tanks beyond the Buralashev ricks. Even the air seems to be filled with the smell of iron.

RUCHKINA: Of course, the maneuvers begin today. (*ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA gives MACCAVEYEV the portfolio.*)

MACCAVEYEV: Again, my dear young lady, there is nonsense in your accounts. You can't keep springtime in your head all of the year . . . Is seven times nine eighty-one?

DUSSYA: Please let me do it over right now. There is such a to-do with everybody waiting for guests. We were in such a hurry . . .

RUCHKINA (*breaking in on her*): We were in such a hurry to get here. Dusska ran all the way. She even broke off the heel of a shoe in the ditch.

DUSSYA: I certainly did not run. That heel was shaky a long time. Take a look at it, Adrian Timofeyevich . . . you are a specialist in all these things. All the nails in it are rusty. There was certainly nothing for me to run about. I am married.

RUCHKINA (*flaring up*): Well, they are chasing me too. But I won't throw myself at the first passer-by.

DUSSYA: No matter what anyone may say, she always talks about Unuss. She's found something to boast about. He looks like an arithmetical number in cotton breeches. One can admire such a lunatic, but only in a cellar, late at night, and blindfolded. His name alone—Unuss. Unuss struck a prunus in his gumus . . . Lord, what a joke!

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Our little friends have quarreled again? Which time is it today?

DUSSYA: The—yes, the third. Well, get over your mad-on. Kiss me. (*She embraces RUCHKINA, who finds it unpleasant.*) My Platon is also a treasure that cannot be hidden. The boys haven't come yet, and he is already— What was the name of the negro who strangled his wife? (*She whispers something in RUCHKINA's ear.*) Can you imagine the kind of old fruit he is?

RUCHKINA: Let me go. It is too warm.

DUSSYA: Mavra told a story that one of Mossey's chickens laid a cooked egg. According to what I think, this is highly unscientific. What do you think, Adrian Timofeyevich? You are a specialist . . . Hush, voices . . . (*She looks out.*) No, they are leading Issay here. Even early this morning I was all agog with the knowledge that new people are coming here . . .

RUCHKINA: And young people. That is the most important thing.

DUSSYA: Are you trying to pay me back?

THE VOICE OF UNUSS OUTSIDE: Lean a little harder on me. There is still another step. (*Holding one crutch in his hand, he leads in ISSAYKA.*) Good evening, a good evening to all of you. The barometer is falling. (*Melancholically.*) Hurrah. Hurrah.

ISSAYKA: Now you can let me go. I can make it myself.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Just take a look at the promenader. He can't stay home a moment.

ISSAYKA: My brothers haven't arrived yet? . . . Well, take me and hide me behind the curtain.

UNUSS (*greeting everyone in turn*): There I was walking, and he

lay under an apple tree, very like a birdling that has fallen out of its nest. Sick people must lie, and vice versa, well people must walk. (*Giving a package to MACCAVEYEV.*) Your mail. There is a note here that was brought by a man on a motorcycle. The maneuvers are beginning. One can see the movement of the troops. (*To RUCHKINA.*) You are beautiful to-day.

RUCHKINA: You always take my hand as if yours were a vise. Lie down, Issay, don't be ashamed.

ISSAYKA: I've got to fix the talking-machine before they arrive.

MACCAVEYEV (*in a severe tone of voice, which is unsuccessful*): So, little brother, you have begun thinking up excursions. You have no right to be so proud.

ISSAYKA: Scold me, scold me, Maccaveyev. Mama, give me the kerosene. It is there, on the window sill, in a jar.

RUCHKINA: Keep on with your work; I will give it to him. You have a whole machine shop here. I will bring you my umbrella; the catch on it has broken away. May I?

ISSAYKA: First the talking-machine, then Mossey's spirits kettle. Strict orders. Then you can bring the umbrella.

RUCHKINA: How is life treating you, Issay?

ISSAYKA: Hold it here. I will drive a hole. (*He puts a spring on the table.*) What a drill Vasili sent me! He remembers everything. (*He begins drilling.*) My life is over, my existence has begun.

RUCHKINA: Keep a strong hold on it. Look how strong and hard the Maccaveyevs are. What carcasses they have.

ISSAYKA: Eh, and am I a Maccaveyev. . . . Are the Maccaveyevs like this? (*There is a silence.*) It was Mossey who told me this about life, but I don't believe him. I have no right to believe him.

DUSSYA: You will do great things yet, Issay. I have a premonition.

ISSAYKA: I want to do things. (*With controlled jealousy.*) The Burnashev boys have gone into the Red Army, singing. They are good singers. . . . Just one more hole. You aren't tired? You are all dressed up today.

RUCHKINA: I'm celebrating the last days of my vacation. Then there will be noise again, and children. I love the news the children bring

me after vacation. (*A little wheel rolls to the floor. She picks it up.*) Don't bend, don't bend. I will pick it up for you.

ISSAYKA: My hands are trembling. Yuri promised in his letter to examine me. He is something like a professor now. Sickness is afraid of him as if he were the devil.

DUSSYA: Adrian Timofeyevich, you always talk to us about Vasili, but it seems you have doctors in the family too.

MACCAVEYEV (*breaking off talk with UNUSS*): Just ask me what we haven't got. To please any taste. And now we are going to renovate Issayka. Here, my famous promenader, catch these papers. (*He throws him the package.*) Read them, and then make your report. Yes, I have many sons. An orchard.

DUSSYA: When did you get time for all of them, Aleksandra Ivanovna? One could never tell it either by your years or your face.

RUCHKINA: They are the sons of the first marriage of Adrian Timofeyevich. (*To ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA.*) I knew your sister when I was a little girl.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: I have only two children. The others are Nastenka's. We've been waiting a long time for them. They haven't been home for three years now.

MACCAVEYEV: Why overload the freight trains for no reason whatever?

UNUSS (*letting out a long puff of smoke*): There is a proverb: Fathers should not tyrant it over their children.

RUCHKINA (*patiently*): There is no such word, Irod. And there is no such proverb. And then, what is it that you are smoking?

UNUSS: This is an experiment with tobacco. A new kind.

RUCHKINA: Half and half with powdered flies, I suppose. (*She coughs and moves aside. UNUSS hides his pipe.*) The children will not recognize the place now, it has changed so much. And if you take all of that time . . .

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: It is twenty years already, but it seems like yesterday. Dussenka, I have already cleaned that place. It seems that all I have to do is close my eyes, and again there will be evening and song and youth, and the wagons rattling in the steppe, and this house

broken by shot, as if standing on its knees . . . (*There is the faraway rattle of a machine gun. Everybody listens.*)

DUSSYA: They have begun.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: When they brought us here, and told us: "Build," this was a burned-down house with two acres of a cut-down orchard. This wall lay on the ground and this night-bird sat on it. Adrian killed it.

UNUSS (*looking at the stuffed bird*): Its Latin name is *Bubo maximus*. There is still another kind, *Bubo ascaliphus*, with spots on the breast, but it does not live amongst us.

RUCHKINA: How funny you are, Irod. This bird is a hoot owl.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA (*smiling*): We slept all together on the floor, and the snow came in through the cracks in the walls. Once at night I tipped a teakettle to drink, but the water had frozen. Silence. Adrian is at the front. The children sleep. . . . The beginning of peace.

DUSSYA: You are really a poet, Aleksandra Ivanovna, a one-hundred-per-cent poet. But why don't they arrive? (*Everybody looks at the clock.*) Let me have something else to clean. (*STREKOPYTOV enters. He is completely dressed now.*)

STREKOPYTOV: My faithful one, who will give me my supper? Get ready to come home, little mother.

DUSSYA: You heard him, all of you heard him? But don't anyone pay any attention to him. I want to hear more.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Perhaps you will eat a pirozhok, Platon Platonovich? I baked them for the children.

STREKOPYTOV: I don't eat pirozhoks just like that. Pirozhok is a substance that is dry.

DUSSYA: Don't give him any vodka. He will smear his face with ink and strangle me on the counter.

UNUSS: Lend me some of your tobacco mixture, Comrade Strekopytov, and smoke a pipe, as I do. (*With a sigh, STREKOPYTOV sits down next to him and the two light their pipes.*)

MACCAVEYEV: And so, there was Victor running about without pants, killing with a sling. And suddenly he is somebody on the radio. M-m, he gives consultations. But he will never catch up with Vasili.

DUSSYA: I can see him right now. He sits in an iron tower, and the wind moves the hair on his head. And they are so soft. And his voice is so melodious, a little like a baritone.

RUCHKINA: Dussya, you have never heard him speak in your life.

DUSSYA: I notice, Soniushka, that none of the higher experiences ever fall to your share.

MACCAVEYEV: Or Yuri, for instance. He was a desperate boy, his head full of ideas. He used to carry lizards in his bosom. . . . (Dussya shivers with detestation.) Suddenly they reported in the papers that he had vaccinated himself with something, for the sake of science. The rest of the scientists tore their hair with despair, but he revaccinated himself, and without bad results. He is something like Vasili, this son of mine, a man of decision.

DUSSYA: He is not a psychiatrist? I love psychiatrists madly. There is always something in them.

STREKOPYTOV: Dussya, don't make everybody laugh. Let us go home.

DUSSYA: You ought to take a hypnotic cure from him for your vodka. And now, for the fourth.

MACCAVEYEV: Another is the champion of five cities. He hits them with both his left and his right. His name is Anatoly. I must make excuses for him, but he is a boxer.

RUCHKINA: One should ask no excuses for strength. Strength is good.

UNUSS: Why do you need strength, Sofya Nikolayevna?

RUCHKINA: To protect the old age of my mother and the honor of my sister, if for nothing else. You are too gentle, Irod. You close your eyes before you step on a snail, not to see it die. But there is much evil in the world, and one must fight it.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: And two of them are in the service. Sergey is somewhere in the neighborhood. He is a tank commander. You will soon see him.

MACCAVEYEV: He has sent me a note. Here, read it.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA (*reading the note*): He writes that he will come for a while after the maneuvers. It's a pity he won't be here with the others. (*There is a silence.*) And Vasili commands a sub-

marine, under water. Under heavy sea water. Tell us something about your Vasili, Adrian.

ISSAYKA: Papa praises Vasili more than anybody else.

MACCAVEYEV: He does not need my praise. Our government does not give decorations for nothing. When he comes, you will see yourselves.

RUCHKINA: And your Masha, although she is not a son, seems to be forgotten.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: She arrived at dawn. She is asleep. (*She points to the ceiling.*) Issay, why are you making so much noise?

ISSAYKA: I must reattach the spring.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Do it in a whisper somehow . . . She is the dearest thing we have. You know the modern girls; they drink beer, and jump from airplanes. One almosts faints when one thinks of them. But she is as quiet as the light of evening; you can't even see her shadow when she walks.

STREKOPYTOV: Wait a bit, and somebody will come to take her away. With a mug as big as a pumpkin, and terrific mustaches, chewing a cigarette . . . And he will take away your Masha. (*There is the sound of a deep, faraway explosion.*)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: It sounds like a storm. The boys will come home in the rain. When did it blow up? (*There is one very strong explosion. DUSSYA runs out and returns.*)

ISSAYKA: War knocks at the gates of the orchards of Polovchansk.

DUSSYA: They are shooting behind the orchard. Who will come with me there into the meadows? They are firing rockets, and it seems that the apple trees are running with fright. Soniushka, let's go. . . . Perhaps the military bands will parade.

STREKOPYTOV: Where will they go? The bands are used to carry the wounded in war.

ISSAYKA: Mama, can I get out from behind my curtain?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Dussya, take him to the summer house. You can see everything from there as if it were on the palm of your hand. Soniushka, give him his father's field glasses from the counter. But you will sit quietly.

ISSAYKA: Yes, Mama.

DUSSYA (*going out arm in arm with ISSAYKA*): You aren't jealous, Strekopytov? (*There is another explosion.*)

MACCAVEYEV: Fine, sonny.

UNUSS: Comrade Strekopytov, are your new plantings fenced in yet?

STREKOPYTOV: I have sticks standing up, and the root holes are dug.

MACCAVEYEV: It is night now, and they aren't shown on the military maps. It would be best to send some men with lanterns there.

STREKOPYTOV (*standing up*): The men, for their substance is such, have gone to the Baths. Tomorrow is a day of rest, Adrian Timofeyevich.

MACCAVEYEV (*angrily*): Again . . . in front of my eyes . . . spots. Sasha, have you fixed that sleeve? Give that jacket to me as it is. (*He has thrown off his dressing-gown.*)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Adrian, you should lie down.

STREKOPYTOV: Adrian Timofeyevich, you had better look after yourself a little more. (*MACCAVEYEV puts on his old, multicolored buttoned jacket. Little vials fall around him.*) A dragon always remains a dragon.

MACCAVEYEV: We have time to lie down yet, my darlings. Come on, Irod Antonovich. (*Turning at the threshold.*) If my sons arrive . . . feed them. (*He and UNUSS go out.*)

STREKOPYTOV: He needs four pairs of hands. And when he walks in the orchard, the apple trees bend in the wind he raises. Chase Dusska out of here, chase her away from yourself. She will bore you. (*He runs out after MACCAVEYEV.*)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA (*calling after them*): Adrian, what are you doing with yourself? . . . Adrian . . . He will fall somewhere that way.

RUCHKINA: Ever since I can remember him, he has been like this. Whatever place he comes into, the place becomes full.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: When I walked over to him after his attack, he winked with one wet eye. "Here," he rattled, "there isn't enough of me for this world, Sasha. So I'll sick my boys on it . . ."

RUCHKINA: And he will fulfil his threat. (*There is the whir of an airplane and then a noiseless, faraway rocket. Shadows glide across the glass of the windows. RUCHKINA rises.*) It will be light on the way home. I must prepare myself. School opens soon.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Don't leave me alone, Soniushka.

RUCHKINA: You are always so even and so quiet, like a clear autumn day. But today I can't recognize you. The sunlight is gone from your eyes, and all your movements are different. What has happened, Sasha?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: It's awfully close. It would be good to pour a good storm into this oven.

RUCHKINA (*more insistently*): What has happened to you, Sasha?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: I'm afraid, Soniushka. (*There is a silence.*) It was long ago, I was a little girl. . . . Do you remember, I told you once? Well, that man will come here, and his coming can not be avoided. I thought they killed him in prison, but he . . . It even seems to me that I hear his footsteps. Soon he will cross the little bridge. And I do not see his face. What has he become?

RUCHKINA: Sasha, Sasha . . . You have always loved Maccaveyev.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Perhaps the little girl has forgotten that she loves only Maccaveyev. (*She makes a gesture of silence. MASHA enters, coming down the stairway, stretching herself and rubbing her eyes with her hands.*)

MASHA: What time is it now, morning or still night? I can't make out any difference. It is quiet now, but I heard a sort of ringing before. (*Before the stuffed bird.*) Ah, it is you? I greet you, watchman of the night. (*She yawns.*) Mama, there's an awful lot of moths in him. And the boys . . . are they up or asleep?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: They've been held up somewhere. Do you want to eat?

MASHA (*shaking her head negatively*): I have slept too much. My head is in a fog . . . What was it I dreamed about? Something pink, and a lot, a lot of it . . . But I forget what it was.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: At your age everybody dreams that way, Sparrow.

MASHA: It is still ringing. No, it was not a nightmare. And then everything fell and broke to bits. (*She shakes her head.*)

RUCHKINA: Is it stuck there and won't come out? (MASHA sees RUCHKINA. *Holding her head on one side, RUCHKINA looks at her from behind the counter.*)

MASHA: Sofya Nikolayevna . . . Soniushka . . .

RUCHKINA: That was the window glass ringing when the cannon opened fire. The maneuvers have begun. What a big girl you are! (*Holding each other's hands, they whirl in the middle of the floor.*) What a woman you have become, Masha. A man may easily lose his head over you.

MASHA (*touching her cheeks with her fingertips*): Am I red? That is from sleep. Mama, where are you going?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: I am going to fetch Issayka. Dussyia will drag him off somewhere. (*She goes out.*)

RUCHKINA: And what are you doing now, Sparrow?

MASHA: I am an agricultural expert. I was in many places, in the cottonfields. How many people I have seen, and cities. The world is wide, Soniushka.

RUCHKINA: All of your life is before you, all of its flood tide. And I find it pleasant that once you sat before me at a school desk. And your eyes were just as they are now, sleepy. During the winters your family took you to Polovchansk, and I remember how you once asked: "Why is it always winter in Polovchansk, and always summer here with Papa?" (*Both of them laugh.*) Why have you become so sad, Masha?

MASHA: May I kiss you, Sofya Nikolayevna?

RUCHKINA: Why, Masha?

MASHA: Just to kiss you. I didn't have enough money to buy you a present. My salary is very small, you understand.

RUCHKINA: How can you have the heart to say such a thing, Masha!

MASHA: Well, it was you who taught me to love knowledge, work, and life. And the most important thing, to see what is hidden from ignorant eyes.

RUCHKINA: I am happy that I was not forgotten. You may kiss me.

MASHA: Well, I couldn't do it more honestly. It is my desire that all your pupils may rise high, so high that they may see all of mankind and all the cities of the world. And let them remember then who it was that first taught them to see life . . . Vasili often remembers you.

RUCHKINA: Stop, or I shall begin to cry . . . Stop, Sparrow.

MASHA: You haven't married Unuss yet? I am ashamed now that when we were little girls we made fun of you . . . Well, why doesn't something happen between you?

RUCHKINA: You see, an insect did get into my eye. (*There is a silence.*) He is good to me, but he is very quiet. No, somehow nothing has happened between us. Do you know how old I am? Don't say anything; it isn't necessary, Sparrow. Who needs me? Only a Gypsy would bother making love to me, and that on a dark night.

MASHA: Shame, shame, Soniushka.

RUCHKINA: And you have nobody, Sparrow? Make a clean breast of it before this old woman, she will never tell anybody.

MASHA: You are sly to lead me on like this. But I have nothing to confess. My slate is clean . . . And besides, it would interfere with my work. (*Lightly, soundlessly, she walks about the room. RUCHKINA follows her with her eyes.*) It is only now that I begin to recognize the house and the orchard. This electricity here is something new.

RUCHKINA: It's only the first year that it has been here, Sparrow.

MASHA: Tomorrow as soon as the sun rises I will run out to say hello to everybody and everything. Is Mossey alive? What beautiful whistles he used to carve for me! I used to set them up in the meadow, and they would sing themselves in the wind. But the very first thing I will do is to go to the pond to bathe. I will run in to get you, Soniushka. (*Near the open window.*) Silence . . . and the air here. . . . Wait, what is that?

RUCHKINA: A nightingale. The younger generation does not recognize its trills. It begins, begins, but never finishes.

MASHA: Strange. I don't remember the nightingales at all. But it sounds good . . .

RUCHKINA: So you have nobody? Well then, he must have been a

thief. Today, while you were sleeping . . . and when nobody else was here . . . a man came under the window and asked for you.

MASHA (*closing the window sharply*): Who?

RUCHKINA: He told me his name, but I have forgotten it. Masha, what is the matter with you? Sparrow . . . (*There is a noise in the orchard.*)

MASHA: Don't say anything about it. It was nothing.

RUCHKINA (*repeating after her*): It was nothing. (*Enter ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA.*) Didn't you find Issay?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: No. I took a walk in the orchard. Why did you bang the window, Masha? Look into my eyes, darling. What frightened you?

MASHA (*lost*): There . . . in the garden . . .

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: No one was there except myself. And nobody has ever heard about crime in our end of the world. We all have enough to eat.

RUCHKINA: Masha, please excuse me.

MASHA: No, no. (*Pressing her hands to her cheeks.*) How my face is burning! Mama, what is happening to me? I think I am getting sick. (*Enter MACCAVEYEV. He is happy. He throws his jacket upon the armchair. There is no sign of his illness. He eats, standing at the table.*)

MACCAVEYEV: Who will dare to go into the orchards? Any tea, my learned ones? Well, the cavalry passed, Sasha. I remembered how we once rode in night raids, and became excited again. What a cloud of dust they raised! What's the matter with all of you? You are as quiet as if you were catching mice.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Masha became sick on her way here. Where are the powders? They were here somewhere.

MACCAVEYEV: From the heat. The road is like hot ashes under foot. (*He drinks from the jar, and spits.*) You should have covered this, housewife. (*He puts the jar down, and comes nearer to MASHA.*) What are you complaining about, Sparrow?

RUCHKINA: Masha imagined she saw somebody in the orchard.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: It's a pity that Anatoly isn't home. He would

have borne witness as to what kind of beast was prowling there. I suppose some boys stole in to get at the apples.

MACCAVEYEV: What, are they sweetest on the trees nearest the house? (*There is a silence.*) Perhaps it was a ghost. You can see them only from one side. They are invisible on the other. Three years ago a phantom began stealing chickens in Burnashevka. He got two years in the solitary for it. Now he is a watchman at the club and is getting along fine . . . (*He tilts MASHA's chin up with his hand.*) Your brothers seem to have taken a vacation, Sparrow.

MASHA: They will come.

MACCAVEYEV: N-no, the birdlings have forsaken the nest. You, too, will fly away from me some day, Sparrow.

MASHA: I have already made my arrangements in the Narkomat. In the spring I will come here to you to work with you always . . . Blood! What has happened to your hand? Did you cut it?

MACCAVEYEV: That's nothing; it's the soil that cracked it. A little lard will fix it up. Well, mother, what happened here?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: I had gone away. I wasn't here.

MACCAVEYEV: Sofya Nikolayevna, what about you? (*There is a silence.*) Sofya Nikolayevna, no one lies in this house.

RUCHKINA (*abashed*): Today, when Masha slept, a man came here to see her. I was here by accident, I came to get a dress pattern . . .

MACCAVEYEV: Ah. Was the man young or old?

RUCHKINA: I didn't pay any attention . . . Young.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Leave them alone, Adrian. It will pass. . . . Her cheeks look this way because of her journey.

MACCAVEYEV: Sasha, she is my only daughter . . . Sew up my sleeve now. I tore it on the fence. Do you know him—that man, Sparrow?

MASHA: Yes.

MACCAVEYEV: And is it a long time that you have known him?

MASHA: Not at all. (*With sudden courage.*) Of course, I have known him a long time.

MACCAVEYEV: A year or two? How long? Come, be brave, Sparrow.

MASHA: A month . . . yes, a month.

MACCAVEYEV: She has known him a long time, a month. That's tempo for you, mother, the breath of the times.

RUCHKINA: You didn't let the girl rest from her journey . . .

MACCAVEYEV: Well, what is he, Sparrow? Some jurist or an official in a co-operative?

MASHA: I don't know. I was going up to see Vasili. We met on the stairway. He waited till I passed him. He was in a uniform like Vasili's . . . (*She makes a sign to show stripes on a sleeve.*) He looked after me until I shut the door.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: So you looked back? Did you look back at him, Mashenka?

MASHA: No.

MACCAVEYEV: History is repeating itself, Sasha. It strikes at us from the clear sky . . . Then how is it that you know, daughter, that he looked after you?

RUCHKINA (*trying to change the conversation*): If she could no longer hear his footsteps, it meant that he was standing in one place. And if he was standing in one place, then what else could he be doing? (*Frightened by the similarity of events and words, ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA touches various things about her in her quandry.*)

MASHA (*rising*): I had better go upstairs. I haven't unpacked yet.

MACCAVEYEV: There is no hurry, Mashenka. We will never ask you this again. Well, did you meet again? No, no, just like your mother, entirely by accident.

MASHA: Yes. Once at night . . .

MACCAVEYEV: Of course. That is no business for the morning.

MASHA (*sharply*): No. I was walking home from the Academy. I had been at an election meeting. Three men accosted me. I ran from them and fell. And this man . . . (*There is a silence.*) He was walking behind, by accident.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: And so, Mashenka?

MASHA: He made those three men run. (*There is another silence.*) I never even said a word to him.

MACCAVEYEV: Do people speak in such circumstances? They never

speak, they are only silent and smile. Well, Sparrow, did you invite him here?

MASHA: No.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: You wouldn't care for it if he should come here . . . by accident?

MASHA: It would be no concern of mine. What is it, Papa? Let me go. You are hurting my hands.

MACCAVEYEV: Sasha, she doesn't want it. She knows that the first is not the most important. It always brings sorrow, the first. Don't be afraid, Sparrow. We will arrange it that way. We will not let him come.

RUCHKINA: Let us go, Masha, to the upper terrace. Come.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA (*half-lost*): Go with her, Sparrow, go. That is the best place in the house, where the scent of the apple trees . . . (RUCHKINA and MASHA go up and out by the stairway.)

MACCAVEYEV (*calling after them*): You will fly away from me, Sparrow, as your brothers have done. (MASHA stops, but does not turn around, and continues on her way up and out.)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: She turned dark, as if lightning had struck her. And her voice grew hoarser. You heard?

MACCAVEYEV: Did it remind you of yourself, Sasha? (*Rearranging his medicines on the little table.*) None of your powders will be of any help here. (*Then he walks about the room, touches ISSAYKA's instruments.* ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA watches him from the doorway.) How many times have I told you not to keep the dogs chained?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Adrian, your dogs can be of no help here. And times have changed. They get married without asking these days.

MACCAVEYEV: The times are new, but I have changed also. (*Hearing a movement on the part of ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA.*) Well, what is it now?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA (*unable to find rest*): What am I to do? What am I to do? . . . Who would ever think that he would come so soon? . . . Matvey is here. (*She hurriedly covers her shoulders with a woolen shawl.* Unwillingly, MACCAVEYEV sits down in his arm-

chair.) For the last time . . . he was your friend once. Don't chase him out, Adrian. (*They wait in silence. Enter PYLYAYEV, in a black coat, holding a long, unpainted walking stick. He removes his cap. A lock of graying hair sticks to his temple. Biting his mustache and holding on to the doorjamb behind him, he stands just this side of the threshold.*)

PYLYAYEV: There are no dogs loose in the house?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: They are chained. Come in. There is nothing to be afraid of.

PYLYAYEV: They do not like me.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: The dogs . . . Adrian, we have a guest. Are you asleep? (*To PYLYAYEV.*) Two nights ago he had a heart attack.

PYLYAYEV: That's something with which I am familiar. What are these, rugs? (*He touches them with his stick.*) Rugs are a good thing in a house. For the feet. I like this place. How are you, Adrian? (*MACCAVEYEV does not move.*) Why are you looking at me in that way? Have I grown old?

MACCAVEYEV: Come in, and be a guest. Take off your rags.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: We didn't hear you come. Did you come on foot?

PYLYAYEV: I wasn't in a hurry. So I hiked with this stick for my companion. The meadows are full of dew, the birds are singing. It was good. (*He hangs his coat carefully on the back of a chair, and stands his stick in a corner.*) Adrian, why don't you ask why I came?

MACCAVEYEV: I know why.

PYLYAYEV (*ready to sit down, but straightening up*): What, what do you know?

MACCAVEYEV: I know why you came here. To take a rest.

PYLYAYEV (*to ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA, more at ease*): He knows everything. You couldn't hide anything from him. The old place called me. I thought that as soon as I left the railroad station I would see the tracks of my horse. But no. The night wind comes and rubs out the tracks of day.

MACCAVEYEV (*to his wife*): He's hitting into poetry now. That's from hunger. Fill him up, Sasha. See to it. (*ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA is*

glad to find some occupation for her restless hands.) Why shiver, are you cold? There's some of it there, in the little buffet. Warm yourself. (PYLYAYEV goes to the buffet, fills a glass, and drinks.) Open the door, Sasha.

PYLYAYEV: Number two in the middle . . . (*He drinks again.*) I have become a comedian, Adrian. Perhaps I should take another glass. (*He waits, looking at the two of them; but they are silent, and he hurriedly closes the buffet.*)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: We expect our children today. They are flying from all the ends of earth to their paternal nest. Please don't drink more to spoil our meeting.

PYLYAYEV: What are you saying? Of course not. I have become an altogether different man. People who meet me on the street don't recognize me. (*He sits down at the table.*) It has grown warmer, and my fingers feel more supple. And you, Adrian, I see that you are the same tree doctor; you treat your trees and debate with the butterflies. . . . That is the wisdom of wisdoms. The pirozhoks are with meat. (*He eats. There is a silence.*) And how many sons have you got?

MACCAVEYEV: Seven.

PYLYAYEV: What a hoard of a treasure! And who is the seventh?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Issayka. You don't know him. He was born after you went away. Eat, eat that piece of herring.

PYLYAYEV: Quite an establishment you have here. Walking by I saw that you have a lot of apples. The trees are over-heavy with them. Riches. And moths flying, lively ones. I love to see moths flying. How long is it that we haven't seen each other?

MACCAVEYEV: Eighteen years.

PYLYAYEV: That's a long time.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Tell us what happened to you in those eighteen years.

PYLYAYEV: Everything happened. Is there any salt in the house? (ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA gives him a salt cellar.) At the present time I live rather well. But I have a lot of worries and I should like to change my occupation. You won't give me some sort of job around

this place? Something like guarding a garden? The crows are afraid of me. (*He laughs.*) I am joking. I have a very good job. My superiors like me.

MACCAVEYEV: Sasha, give him a napkin. Why does he wipe his hands on the tablecloth all the time? And don't run away from him, Sasha. Sit down a little closer to him.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: He should wash himself before eating. (*To PYLYAYEV.*) Your things will be brought here by the carter?

PYLYAYEV: No, I was robbed on the train. I slept, and they cut a hole in the wall above my head. They did it very cleverly too. Only a little hole was left.

MACCAVEYEV: Let him put on some other clothes later, Sasha. Give him one of my clean shirts. Did you finish mending my coat? Well, add the coat to the shirt.

PYLYAYEV (*ashamed of ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA*): I will do it later, Adrian, later. (*He folds the coat on his knees.*)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Adrian, I will go meanwhile to make a bed for him. (*She takes her husband's silence for permission to go, and goes upstairs.*)

PYLYAYEV: Why does she run away from me?

MACCAVEYEV: You smell of carbolic acid, Matvey Fomich. Were you sick?

PYLYAYEV: I'm so used to it I don't notice it any longer. I have become like Job in the Bible, Adrian.

MACCAVEYEV: What were you sick with?

PYLYAYEV: A little of everything, at bargain rates. How young Sasha looks.

MACCAVEYEV: Why not? Life is smooth, power is in the hands of the Soviets, there is work enough for everybody, she is out in the air all day long.

PYLYAYEV: How her shoulders play. (*MACCAVEYEV takes him by the hand and they look straight at each other for a minute. He lowers his head.*) I can control myself. Let me go.

MACCAVEYEV: Then why did you come here? (*There is a silence.*) Oh, I know. You wanted to see your son. (*ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA runs down the stairs.*)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Adrian, I heard a truck rumbling outside. . . . Adrian . . . (*She runs out into the orchard.*)

MACCAVEYEV: Well, drink what you can. While my sons are here, I won't give you any. My sons are strict.

PYLYAYEV: You don't tell me . . . I will lock myself in a little room and they will not even know that I am here. (*MACCAVEYEV sits down in his armchair and covers his feet with an old woolen blanket. PYLYAYEV goes to the side of the room. From the orchard comes the sound of laughter and young voices. Enter ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA with a tall truckman who is loaded with valises.*)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: I want all of these things upstairs. You can take them up in one trip. Leave them in the corner room . . . It seems that they skipped our railroad station coming here. We mustn't expect Vasili until morning . . . Adrian, the children have come home . . . (*The truckman, walking on his toes, and looking sideways at MACCAVEYEV, carries the valises up the stairway.*)

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

The large upper terrace of the Maccaveyev home. The crooked balustrade is covered with wild grapevine. On a table is a decanter with cider. On the left a narrow staircase against the wall of the house leads down. One can see the yellowing tops of apple trees. There are a larger table, stools, and a wooden divan, blackened by time and exposure. Two pairs of boxing gloves hang on one of the balustrade newel posts. On a table in a corner are a weighing-machine, a microscope, and two apples of different kinds. It is early afternoon. Half of the terrace is in shade. MACCAVEYEV walks on the terrace and dictates. STREKOPYTOV is writing. UNUSS is near the weighing-machine.

MACCAVEYEV: You will add the total of invested capital later, and enter it in the report, Irod Antonovich. (*To STREKOPYTOV.*) Start writing again . . . The Sovkhoz promises, besides, to enlarge the area of planting until it reaches four hundred hectares.

STREKOPYTOV (*ironically*): You can promise them, for that is the essence of the thing, an orchard that will reach the shores of the Black Sea.

UNUSS: That is nothing. What man proposes can always be doubled. What I want to say is that one can do twice as much as a man imagines.

MACCAVEYEV: Have you written that down? Colon. And, at last, to raise the productivity to forty-eight tons per hectare, and the amount of honey to eighty kilograms per beehive.

STREKOPYTOV (*leaping up*): But that is pure nonsense, Adrian Timofeyevich. My dear fellow, remember that you will have to prove it all in production. I myself, and that is the essence of it, have served thirty-two years in the Crimean orchards, and there they have age-old trees . . .

MACCAVEYEV (*pointing down beyond the balustrade*): Take a look at your lifeguard. Whom are they imitating?

STREKOPYTOV (*shouting down*): Hey, hey . . . you there, with the shawl on your head . . . did I ever tell you to work that way? You're not working for a boss. A little more freely there, with a fuller swing . . . What's happening to my head? . . . No, I beg of you—you are the director of the Sovkhoz—just touch it; just touch my forehead.

UNUSS: That is the sun. It heats all smooth surfaces. Come over to this side. It is better here. (*He and MACCAVEYEV carry the little table into the shade.*) They say that the thermometer burst in the sunlight. But I didn't see it.

STREKOPYTOV (*holding the paper and the inkwell in his hands*): Just remember the dry spell, Adrian Timofeyevich. There hasn't been a drop of rain from midsummer on . . . And nevertheless, one might say in spite of nature . . .

UNUSS: The Raikom, Comrade Strekopytov, knows all there is to know about the dry spell. We must report the things it doesn't know. (*In a very friendly tone.*) And you mustn't think about your wife. She is young. Enter deeper into the laws of nature.

STREKOPYTOV: To enter into all the laws of nature is to go mad.

(ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA comes in, with dishes and food, puts them on the large table, and goes out.)

MACCAVEYEV: Don't disturb the train of our thoughts. They will come to eat here soon. (*Dictates.*) Thus, comma, the Sovkhoz established in the Year of October on the dead clay of Polovchansk by the will of the people and the Soviet Power . . .

UNUSS: You have the full right to say a word about yourself also, Comrade Maccaveyev.

MACCAVEYEV: I am the people and the Soviet Power too. No remarks, please.

VOICE OF MASHA (*below*): Mama, catch the soap.

MACCAVEYEV: And there we are. Here, Irod Antonovich, you will pick out a proper quotation, something about a universal orchard. So. And now all that remains is the pomological passport. Come; give me the apple. And it isn't a bad apple, my dear friends.

STREKOPYTOV: They say, Adrian Timofeyevich, that you used to kill people in the Civil War.

MACCAVEYEV: You kill me every day, Platon Platonovich. And so, your attention, comrades. It is a new kind. The name, Fatherland, is to remain. (*Raising the apple high.*) Let us begin. Well, what do we see? The shape of the fruit.

UNUSS (*severe, hiding his long pipe in a homemade pouch*): Oval and ribbed.

STREKOPYTOV: I see an addition here: slightly narrowing along the axis.

MACCAVEYEV: You can leave that out. It isn't important. The coloration. Let us say, dusky . . .

STREKOPYTOV (*looking up sideways, writing*): Dusky. Near the stem, on the sun side, a tenderly tinted flush. I will cross out "tenderly." The report will be printed in the newspapers.

MACCAVEYEV: Underline "tenderly" twice . . . Did you weigh it?

UNUSS: I couldn't believe it the first time. Let us weigh it again. (*He puts the apple in the scales. They all look on.*) Masha lost the ten-gram weight six years ago. But we will take the fifty-gram weight, and subtract twenty grams twice. Wait till it stops. Look. Four

hundred thirty grams. That is wonderful body. The Geoffrey First-born will become blue in the face and rot with jealousy, ha-ha . . .

STREKOPYTOV (*patting his shoulder*): Don't exaggerate, Irod Antonovich.

MACCAVEYEV: And now, the taste. Your attention. (*He wipes the blade of a crooked pruning knife on a grape leaf, and then cuts the apple into three sections. Each of the men chews one of the sections.*) Don't hurry. You are making history. How have you written it down?

STREKOPYTOV: It won't do, it doesn't sound serious enough. Muscat-winy, passing into the gamut of lemon.

UNUSS: Add the following: "with a sharp icy" . . . No, cross that out. Write this way: "with a transparently icy aroma." That covers it exactly.

STREKOPYTOV: What kind of aroma is that—"transparently icy"? Excuse me, but there is no such aroma.

UNUSS: Smell it again, if all your organs have not lost their usefulness. There is a coldness coming from it; the dew lies on it. Look. (*Voices below, and quick steps on the stairway.*)

RUCHKINA: Masha? What have you thought up now? (*MASHA and RUCHKINA, carrying towels, run up to the terrace. The thin bathrobe MASHA wears does not hide her figure.*)

MASHA: Excuse us; we did not know . . .

MACCAVEYEV: Come in, come in. We have almost finished.

MASHA (*kissing MACCAVEYEV*): What a morning we had. We have been everywhere, at the spring, and at the apiary.

RUCHKINA: She began kissing Mossey, and he was completely lost at the beginning, but then he began breaking honeycombs, breaking them and rumbling, breaking them and rumbling in his beard.

MASHA: My head is still whirling, and my fingers still smell of honey. What are you chewing? Give me a piece, too.

UNUSS: Masha, when did you have time to grow like this?

MASHA (*gesturing to RUCHKINA*): He is just as he always was. Now he will deliver a speech. (*UNUSS has picked up the remaining apple. He is at a loss as to which of the two women to give it to. RUCHKINA walks to the side.*)

UNUSS: Take it, Comrade Masha. (*She stretches her hand for the apple, but he still keeps it.*) Soon we will celebrate the jubilee of our young fatherland. Later it will be forty years old, and a hundred years old, but the age of twenty never repeats itself in life.

RUCHKINA: Irod, everybody knows that without your help.

UNUSS: Everyone bears it his fruits and his gifts. One—locomotives of lightning speed; others—records of coal production, or even a flight into the unknown. (*To RUCHKINA.*) May one say the unknown, Sofya Nikolayevna? . . . We, the little people, bring it an apple. (*Again he hurries to give it to MASHA.*) It is beautiful, and better than any other apple. The great and farseeing friend, who sees everything, let him take it in his hand and praise its wise weight.

MACCAVEYEV: We have been making this apple in secret, Masha, for seven years. Take it.

MASHA: I am much honored by all this ceremony. But it isn't enough. There are two of us.

RUCHKINA: Eat it, eat it, Sparrow, as a present for your homecoming.

STREKOPYTOV: This year we are marketing our first two tons. (*MASHA looks at him without recognition.*) I am Platon Platonovich.

MASHA: Old man of the sea! And I didn't recognize you at all. Where is the thickest of all beards?

UNUSS: Ho-ho, time changes the visage of man, as some ancients say.

MACCAVEYEV: You ask him about his marriage.

STREKOPYTOV (*covering his chin with the palm of his hand*): I slept through half an age, sucking pepper vodka. And suddenly I saw moonlight, and noticed a female footprint in the virgin snow. And that was when they cut off my beard. Gad, what a parody it is in its general complexity. Well, it is time to go. Sofya Nikolayevna, did you see my Dusska there? (*He and UNUSS go down the stairway.*)

MASHA (*after them*): Old man of the sea. Old man of the sea, where is your thickest of beards? (*ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA comes up with a tablecloth.*)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: We will lunch right away. Don't go away now. Keep them here, Adrian.

MACCAVEYEV: Wait awhile, Mother. I see you have bathed, Sparrow?

MASHA: I dreamed of it all the way home, to go leaping into the water. But you poured all the ponds out on your apple trees, Maccaveyev. I had to drag myself all the way back of the apiary. . . . The water was covered with green scum, but at the very bottom, if you dive, the water is crystal clear. And both of us crawled out like mermaids, covered with green scales.

RUCHKINA: There was only one mermaid, Sparrow. One shouldn't be wiser than the truth.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: One mustn't be wiser, but one should be better.

MACCAVEYEV: And you slept very well, I see.

MASHA (*holding out the apple*): Is that its own aroma?

MACCAVEYEV (*putting her hand aside*): And your cheeks are no longer burning?

MASHA: No, that passed. And are the boys still sleeping? How nasty of them! Soniushka, let's go wake them up.

RUCHKINA: I don't believe that they remember me at all.

MASHA: What nonsense. You will see; they are the finest in the world.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: They have been up for some time. Anatoly was boxing with his shadow all morning up here. They're walking in the orchard now. (*Issayka comes in up the stairs.*)

ISSAYKA: Papa, they are waiting for you in the office.

MACCAVEYEV: I'm on my way. Call me for lunch. (*He goes down.*)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: I'm going to take away your crutches, Issayka. Yuri has permitted you to walk without them on even ground for an hour each day.

ISSAYKA: I am eighteen years old. It is time for me to learn how to climb a staircase.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: He won't let me say a word. Towards evening you will not have your crutches.

MASHA: Issay, did you fix the talking-machine? Good, we will arrange a festival of the dance, Soniushka.

RUCHKINA: She hasn't given me a free minute since the day dawned. (*To MASHA.*) No, no. I am growing younger along with you.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: She's a tomboy . . . (*Enter PYLYAYEV. There is a sudden silence.*)

PYLYAYEV: I can't find Adrian anywhere.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: They are writing a report.

PYLYAYEV (*to MASHA*): I bow to your beauty. Introduce us, Aleksandra Ivanovna. Pylyayev. (*MASHA and RUCHKINA bow slightly.*) There was a time when people imagined mountain precipices in the whisper of that name. And I knew you when you were very little. You yourself didn't exist. What existed was only the premonition of you . . . in the fleeting moment of a gaze, in the blossoms of that spring. . . . (*There is a silence.*) But women no longer look at me. And there are times when one is sorry for these faded velvet cheeks.

ISSAYKA: Mama, who is this dusty man in Papa's jacket?

RUCHKINA: Let us go, Issay. This is an old friend.

MASHA: And it seems to me too old to renew his acquaintance. (*She, RUCHKINA, and Issayka go down.*)

PYLYAYEV: You've brought up hard-hearted children. It must be a wonderful orchard where every apple has thorns.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA (*trying to change the conversation*): Did you take a long walk today?

PYLYAYEV: Yes, I visited all of your establishment, and I must say that in comparison . . . By the way, those tremendous vats and presses . . .

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: They are experimental. Adrian is trying to make cider. He is always inventing something.

PYLYAYEV: I guessed as much. Even when he was young he was a restless fellow. Ho, the world is stilled and has ceased breathing; all are waiting for Maccaveyev's cider.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Smoke awhile, while I go down. We are having lunch soon.

PYLYAYEV: Don't run away from me, please. I won't do it any more. Come closer to me. I changed my hide. I don't smell badly any longer.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: You are an old man. You ought to be ashamed, Matvey.

PYLYAYEV: You don't like my mustaches, I suppose? Well, I am no great advocate of mustaches myself. I'll cut them off.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Don't say anything without thinking. It hurts me.

PYLYAYEV: Thanks. In the blackest hours Pylyayev was encouraged by the thought that here he would be met by the old caresses . . . True, in half-ration style. Have you no pity left?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: I don't want that pity to grow into detestation for you.

PYLYAYEV: But tell me, tell me in a whisper. . . . One doesn't lie to beggars. If I called you again to come with me . . . (ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA *shows unconscious fear.*) Well, well. I was joking. You have found safe anchorage here, and Pylyayev is another man anyway. He has found charity under Maccaveyev's couch. Life is like a woman's heart. They rubbed out Pylyayev, they wrote in Maccaveyev, and no one has even noticed it.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: How can you compare Adrian to yourself?

PYLYAYEV: It won't hurt him. He walks, and everything flowers around him: the orchard, his sons, the very stones on which he treads. So this is the place towards which I crawled for eighteen years. (*He pulls at his collar.*) The robe of Maccaveyev is tight, tight.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: If you entertain such thoughts, it will be hard for you to stay with us.

PYLYAYEV: I will go away. Will you let me? (*She is silent. He turns to the balustrade, his face to the spaces of the meadows and the orchard.*) Yes, I will go away. There, beyond the woods, blue on the horizon . . . is that the frontier? (*Suddenly turning.*) I only came here because this place was on my way. But there is a little thing: You will not give me something to remember you by?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: You want a picture of me? I haven't had one taken for a long time.

PYLYAYEV: No, no, I wasn't thinking of that. It was of something else that does not fade quite as quickly. You . . . you will perhaps arrange for a little bit of money for me? I will return it by mail. Or better still, I will ask a certain young man to bring it here. He is a

very pleasant person. By the way, he will rest here for a little while too.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA (*with readiness*): All right, Matvey. I was getting ready to take Issayka to a spa for mudbaths. He will never get better lying on his cot. We have no money except Issayka's. But I will take some of it, in secret. How much do you need?

PYLYAYEV: Someone wished a certain Pope of Rome a hundred years of life. He said: "Why put bounds on God's mercy?" I am just like him. Take as much as possible. (*He picks up the microscope.*) This also has a price on our days, and valuable things love to disappear. How much is this thing worth to you?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Put it down. You will drop it. (*Hardheartedly.*) Why do you need so much?

PYLYAYEV: Well, how shall I put it? Life expenses. Under socialism people also like to get things. Is that cider in the carafe? Be a friend, and give me some. (*Almost convulsively, ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA pushes the carafe over the balustrade.*) Look out, you will kill somebody.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: What a beast there lives in you, every minute, every hour.

PYLYAYEV: And a wounded beast, you may add. (*YURI appears from below with a piece of the carafe.*)

YURI: Who is throwing broken bottles around here?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: It fell.

YURI (*to PYLYAYEV*): I didn't recognize you yesterday in all that to-do. I am Yuri Maccaveyev. You remember, during the time of the Occupation, the boy who brought you food to the attic. That was I.

PYLYAYEV: Of course. Of course. You have grown up. It seems you are the director of a clinic? Time, time . . .

YURI: What days those were. The Germans, the conquerors, they turned our Ukraina into one fraternal grave.

PYLYAYEV: Yes, yes . . .

YURI: But your voice has become altogether different.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Only the voice?

PYLYAYEV: Yes, yes, the voice.

YURI: Of all the boys only I knew that you were hiding in our attic. And this secret made me an adult. Do you smoke? . . . I even

clearly remember the night you were captured. At the door I remember a red-headed German in a cap without a visor, his bayonet at his side . . .

PYLYAYEV: I don't like to remember the past. I haven't recovered from it yet. I'll go for a walk below, Aleksandra Ivanovna. (*He goes down.*)

YURI: I think I touched a sore spot in the old man.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Don't be afraid. That wound of his has scarred and it is covered with black fur by now. (*YURI looks at her, astounded by her tone of voice.*) What about lunch? I am a bad housewife. . . . They say that you examined father this morning. Tell me.

YURI: To tell you the truth, your telegram made me think it was worse than it is.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: He has already scolded me for the telegrams. But he wanted to see all of you so much, and I know Adrian well. It began with him in the spring.

YURI: You were ill in the spring, Ma?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Yes. It happened in this way. Everybody had gone to town, and there was no one to play checkers with him. Issayka would read aloud to us in the evenings. And I remember, a sentence occurred, a sentence of such little meaning. . . . (*She repeats by heart.*) "When night would overtake him, he would rise to his full height, facing the sunset, and remember all of his past day." . . . My Adrian leaped up and ran away into the orchard. I ran after him with his jacket, just as I was, without a coat. And there was still snow on the ground . . .

YURI: A long time will pass till his night comes. This man was made to last a long while.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: You tell him to take care of himself.

YURI: You're a fine woman, Ma. I remember when I was sick as a boy. I open my eyes—a ceiling with cracked plaster, a little black moth flying before me all the time. . . . And you are filling the stove near me. Then a coma again, night, hoarfrost on the window panes, little Masha is crying. And again, when I come to myself, you beside

me, curled up near the stove. There were five of us, father was somewhere fighting for the Soviets . . . and you were only a little girl. Give me your hand, mother. (*She gives him her hand. He kisses it.*)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Yuri. Yuri. (*Somewhere in the distance, the clear, stormy rhythm of a song. Both listen.*) The cavalry are passing. How wonderfully well they sing.

YURI: May I ask you a question?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Let us talk about you and your work.

YURI: Here, I have your telegram with me. "Come at once." It is unsigned. I have read it a hundred times. When I read it for the hundred-and-first time, it began to look to me like a cry for help.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Yes, I was afraid he would have another attack.

YURI: That is what I understood. When did the attack take place?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: You talk to me as if I were a little girl. In the evening of the 13th.

YURI: I want the time more exactly, Ma.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: At seven. Fifteen minutes later Unuss was already on his way to get a doctor.

YURI: The attack was at seven. The telegram was sent at eight. But it takes two hours to get to the station. The telegram must have been written at six. Be a little braver, Ma. What took place an hour before the heart attack? (*There is a silence.*)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA (*excited*): Give me a cigarette too. . . . Why are you being sly with me? You know everything. You were sixteen years old then. (*YURI still waits for an answer.*) At six there came a letter from Pylayev. (*Coughing from the smoke.*) Adrian was not at home. They carried him in later. I was afraid . . .

YURI: That is what I wanted to know. What were you afraid of, mother?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: I don't know. . . . But you remember, he was taken to a place from which no one ever returned alive. You remember Grisha Odintzov and Ilya Garkovenka. And they knew whom they had captured. And I was afraid that a man would come who had already died.

YURI: Well, the dead do not walk. They sleep in well-closed compartments.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Oh, how many of them walk amongst us! That is why the living find their living hard. Well, he has already asked me for money.

YURI: Well, give him three rubles. These pipe-smokers love to smoke.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: No, I won't give him anything. It would only be a beginning. Or perhaps I should pay him to go away? I don't know. . . . But how did he ever get out of that place, Yura?

YURI: Our men escaped from stronger prisons.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: You are right. I can laugh myself now. But he has returned no longer ours—it seems to me, not even his own. He walks around the house all the time, waiting for someone . . . another one like himself. I seem to expect the doors to fall in all at once, and a whole graveyard come rushing in after him. . . .

YURI (*after a little silence*): Who can come into the house if you do not want them to come in?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Don't let them come here. (*There is music in the depths of the house.*) There, Issayka has fixed his talking-machine.

YURI: Look at life with gladness, Ma, and it will become happy. And besides, you are not alone. (*A procession comes from the inner rooms. VICTOR, and ANATOLY in a long and brightly colored bathrobe, carry ISSAYKA's talking-machine on a home-made stretcher. From the battered, cloth-covered horn thunders a polka. Behind them come MASHA and RUCHKINA.*)

VICTOR: Hello, hello. The dance festival is declared open. Masha, Sofya Nikolayevna. (*He shouts down to the orchard.*) Papa, Platon Platanovich, shall I write your names down? for a waltz? (*Turning around.*) They wish to dance a march.

MASHA: We have no records of a march.

ANATOLY: I have one in my valise. I brought it with me. (*RUCHKINA changes the records. One hears an ancient, rattly march. With silent gallantry VICTOR invites ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA to dance, and ANATOLY invites MASHA. YURI remains seated. The two couples dance.*)

VICTOR: Don't resist me, Ma. I am a veritable beast when I dance.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Don't, Victor. I have completely forgotten how to dance.

VICTOR: Just imitate me. Now turn, two steps to the left. What's the matter with you? Your lips are trembling.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: It's the heat. The hornets are about again. One of them stung me.

VICTOR: Where did it sting you?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: In the heart, Victor . . .

ANATOLY (*to MASHA*): It's an honor even to walk with you. You've become a glamour girl.

MASHA: Fine words, but you didn't send me a ticket for your match with Voskoboynikov.

ANATOLY: Why didn't you phone me? I knocked him out in the second round. If it hadn't been for the ropes, he wouldn't have stopped for six blocks after I hit him. In December I am going abroad to the Labor Spartakiad. What should I bring you from there? (*The tempo of the waltz slows up and the music becomes hoarse.*)

MASHA: Wind it up again. Wind it up again.

ANATOLY: Issayka reattached the spring, and it's not enough for a full record. (*RUCHKINA turns the handle once. Something clicks, and the machine stops. They all run towards it.*)

VICTOR: Hello, hello. I announce that the festival of dance is over. (*MACCAVEYEV comes up from below.*) Papa, you are late. You could have won the first prize. (*DUSSYA comes running up the stairway.*)

DUSSYA: You have finished dancing already? All through my life I have always been late. (*She looks for a free partner, and sees YURI.*) Why aren't you dancing?

YURI: I am trying to save my shoes. They are new.

DUSSYA: Come; they will stop squeaking. . . . You are Yuri Adrianovich. I know you. (*She sits down next to him.*) You won't be insulted if I ask a question? . . . You are not a psychiatrist? Not even a little bit of one? Well then, as a specialist, tell me something about insanity. I am interested in it scientifically. I myself often have shivers of the spine, and my head feels as if it had been cut off . . .

YURI: Does that happen very often to you?

DUSSYA: No, only when I quarrel with my husband. And you will never guess why. You ought to know the soul of man well. Isn't that true?

YURI: Of course. We doctors couldn't get along without that.

DUSSYA: I don't know if the soul exists, but that it can be sick I know very well. (*There is a silence.*) A woman's soul is more complicated than others, I suppose.

YURI: I wouldn't say that. Its mechanism and its physical appearance are the same as man's. (*The others surround them.*)

DUSSYA: Could you hypnotize me and make me do something? I don't care what it is so long as it isn't bad.

YURI: That is forbidden. The militia wouldn't allow it.

VICTOR: I am the hypnotist in this family. I have forty years of experience, and seven medals. (*In the tone of a professional circus Barker.*) I hypnotize persons of both sexes, domestic animals, agricultural inventories, as well as small silver objects.

DUSSYA (*delighted*): And can you? . . . But let us better begin with my husband. He is already of a mature age, and I should so much like . . . Why do you shake your head?

VICTOR: It won't work with a husband. In such cases hypnotism is powerless.

DUSSYA: You can try. Even if something happens, it would be all right. He is such a universal vodka bibber, and besides. . . . Oh, Soniushka, what is the name of that Negro who . . . Wait, I will bring him here right now. Platon. Platon. (*She runs toward the stairway.*)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Dussya, stay for lunch. Sit down at the table. The food will grow cold.

MACCAVEYEV: It'll never grow cold in this weather. (*Happily.*) Well, children, meet each other. (*Enter PYLYAYEV.*) And this is an old friend of Aleksandra Ivanovna's.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: And yours.

MACCAVEYEV: He liked her very much, but I conquered her. It is only now that I have one hundred and eighty-six hairs on my pate, but in those days I was an attractive man.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Go easy, Adrian.

PYLYAYEV: I don't think anybody remembers me. Pylyayev. (*The brothers are silent, somewhat taken aback by his name.*)

MACCAVEYEV: Everything's fine. Well, get into a line, little boys. The day is pleasant. (*His sons form a line with two places empty. Their father goes to each of them in turn.*) Fine, Yuri. In general, I would not permit objects of such length on the face of the earth. Well, embrace me. Stronger, stronger. (*Freeing himself.*) That's enough. Now tell me of a thought . . . one of your own.

YURI: It is good to live, father, knowing that people need you. It is good to go into battle, father, with a comrade's elbow touching your own.

MACCAVEYEV (*after thinking a moment*): Fine, fine. There is nothing to say against it. Well, and does it go that way with you?

YURI: You can ask our fatherland about that, father.

MACCAVEYEV: So. You cure the sick . . . and you cut them open?

YURI: And I cut them open.

MACCAVEYEV: You never mistake aspirin for castor oil? Look to it.

YURI: What a fine old fellow you are, father. (*To RUCHKINA.*) How many of them passed through my hands in Moscow? You will undress one of them—and his whole body is covered with hieroglyphs of the Civil War. And you begin to read them letter by letter and you get a song.

MACCAVEYEV: Eh, talk of nakedness, and ladies present. . . . Victor, give me your hands. Well, tell me something too. Well.

VICTOR: My country is beautiful, father, but I will pour myself into it, and it will become even better.

MACCAVEYEV: That is a praiseworthy ambition. But what are all these little straps doing on you, and those heathen trousers?

ANATOLY: This is a ciné-camera hanging on him. A good thing, Fatherkin. He will take moving pictures of you and show them after a hundred years.

YURI: He brought it from abroad with him. He went as a consultant to a foreign radio station.

VICTOR: Yes, I butted in amongst the builders.

MACCAVEYEV (*to all*): Did you hear? The devils. Look far from

your tower, sonny. The Japs and the Germans are climbing . . . crawling, crawling nearer all the time. We catch them, but they come again. Use both your eyes.

VICTOR: I give my word, and forever—*F* as in *father*, *O* as in *Olga*, *R* as in *Richard*, *E* as in *Emma*, *V* as in *Vasili* . . . What's the matter? What's the matter, father?

MACCAVEYEV: Vasili. . . This was the place where he would be standing. But Vaska deceived us. (*To ANATOLY.*) And you, man-killer.

ANATOLY: A boxer's greetings, Fatherkin. Well, do you want me to tell you my thought, too?

MACCAVEYEV: Say it, Tolenka, if you can.

ANATOLY: You said just now that there are many enemies around us. In the old days they said, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." I say, "Two eyes for one eye, and a jaw for a tooth."

MACCAVEYEV: A little rough, but it will pass. We'll need some of that, too. What are you laughing at? Come, let's settle it like Taras Bulba, with our fists. Give us room. I'll put a period to his sentence.

ANATOLY (*lightly pushing him off*): Don't play, Fatherkin. You're bound to lose.

MACCAVEYEV: Yes, Maccaveyev has grown old. I seem to be waiting at a railroad station for my train to arrive. Don't see me off, don't wave with your hats. . . .

ANATOLY: You're joking. You could go in the ring, just as you are.

YURI: Lie down on my operating table, old man. I will cut three young Komsomols out of you.

MACCAVEYEV: N-no. My iron is bent. But I have done everything that my reason and my hands found possible. I am proud and important. You see the orchards under the sun? Mine. You finish the job, children. . . .

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Well, you've had enough of each other by now. You've starved them all to death. Sit down, all of you, sit down. (*All except MASHA and MACCAVEYEV sit down.*)

MASHA (*touching MACCAVEYEV's face with her fingertips*): You are

sad today, Maccaveyev. And your brows are as dry as autumn grass.

MACCAVEYEV: Vaska isn't here. Our gathering is not complete. (*He sits down at the table, and points to the place near him.*) Let this seat remain free now. Well, is it poured? (*He rises.*) Allow me, you who are near to me, to present you secretly with this first example of our native cider. It is young and clear, and time will add strength and power to it. . . . And then may our descendants drink in it to our health as we are about to drink to theirs.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Matvey, you will drink with us? Do you want to say anything, Matvey?

PYLYAYEV (*rising*): I am not anxious to formulate. . . . (*He trembles and cannot continue.*) That is the business of others, of inspired prophets. But as to whether they will drink our health or not, let us not force our descendants. . . . (*Everyone has risen.*)

VICTOR (*biting his lip and wiping his eyeglasses as he always does when excited*): I have not completely understood what you just said, but the tone and the meaning of it seem evil to me. I think that it would be best for you to go now and lie down for an hour or so.

MASHA: He has forgotten that in this house it is easy to run into unpleasantness.

PYLYAYEV (*moving away from the table*): I beg your pardon. Something seems to have cracked inside of me. (*He loses his breath, grips his chest. His stool falls.*) Air, more air. . . . There isn't any air. . . .

RUCHKINA: He will faint.

MACCAVEYEV: Take him away. Help him. Matvey, take my arm. . . . Matvey.

ANATOLY: Fatherkin, you let me. I'll have the citizen in bed in no time.

PYLYAYEV: I'll go myself, myself. I beg your pardon. I'll reach the bed myself. (*He goes out. There is a silence.*)

VICTOR: What is it, asthma?

YURI: No, it is dementia jalousiana, brother; in simple Russian, the madness of jealousy. And hate.

MACCAVEYEV: Don't condemn him, children. We must ask him first what kind of weight lies on him. . . .

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: I don't like the way it happened. Put more cream in your plates.

YURI: Vaska wouldn't have praised you for this hospitality, father.

RUCHKINA (*trying to change the theme*): By the way, I didn't understand. . . . Vasili Adrianovich is coming tomorrow?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Yes, it seems so.

MASHA: Wait. I can't remember if I told you. It is possible that Vasili will not come so soon after all.

YURI: But you forget that he has a furlough.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Didn't he get my telegram?

MASHA: He got it. But he was sent away on a submarine expedition. He said that if he returned before winter, he would certainly come here. In the winter he expected to be busy with conferences.

MACCAVEYEV: That's what he wrote himself. . . . (*Digs in his pocket.*) His letter was here somewhere.

VICTOR (*banging his fork against his plate*): What's the matter with all you funny people? In our times everybody goes on expeditions. Owners are expected to know their property.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Wait a minute, Vitenka. (*To MASHA.*) Tell us how it happened.

MASHA: In short, I went to see him about a fortnight ago. He looked stiff, dry, but happy. He said to me: "I shan't be able to go with you, sister. You'll have to excuse me." You see we expected to come here together. "I am being sent," he said, "on an expedition. Kiss the old people for me." I began to ask him questions about it. "It is a secret," he said. "I can't tell you any more." And he laughed. "Is it dangerous?" I asked. "Well," he said, "I am not going alone. But it is very flattering." I liked that one thing about him. It was dangerous, but he was satisfied. So I said, "Dear tramp, I like you very much." We embraced each other. And that was all.

RUCHKINA: But what is the sense of risking one's life? It isn't clear, Sparrow.

ANATOLY: Where is the expedition going?

MASHA: I've told you already I don't know. Nobody knows. But there were railroad tickets on the table. He hadn't time to remove them. (*Quietly.*) The tickets were for the north.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: But the ice is there now. Haven't we any warmer seas?

YURI: You are funny people, you citizens of Polovchansk. A man is permitted to perform a great deed, that is, to try himself in something big. I understand the great deed as the flowering of courage and maturity. And I would make it obligatory for every Komsomol of the country. Show yourself to your fatherland at your full height, youngster.

MACCAVEYEV: You explain everything correctly, as always, Yuri.

ANATOLY: What kind of deed is it if it is secret—if nobody will ever know about it? . . . I understand it when they print your picture in the papers. . . .

VICTOR: Remember, Tolya, only silence makes the boxer beautiful.

ANATOLY: Why do you always teach me? Put on the gloves with me and give me a lesson for four rounds.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Children, children, why should you quarrel?

RUCHKINA (*clearly in the silence*): But I hold to my own. That deed is truly great, of which no one will ever know.

MASHA: Soniushka, are you talking about yourself?

RUCHKINA: You don't know me very well, Sparrow. But I will name you scores of examples. . . .

MASHA: And yet you know of them here, where the newspapers are always three days late. You are not right, Soniushka.

VICTOR: What are you debating? It isn't important if the deed is loud or unheard. For the people it is important that its high trust be fulfilled to the end.

YURI: These are strange words for a candidate of the Party and a teacher. Excuse my plain speaking, Sofya Nikolayevna. In what does the deed you speak about differ from the deed of those who seal it with their death and the graves of nameless soldiers? We seal the deed with life. Name me another country where they speak of the deeds of miners, of tractor drivers, of milkmaids. There is no deed that

is unknown. And it will only then become the attribute of a really new society . . .

VICTOR: This is a result, and I am talking of a cause.

YURI: Take off your eyeglasses, Victor, and look at the masses.

VICTOR: The eyeglasses have nothing to do with it. You are a doctor, but you argue like a boxer.

ANATOLY: Vitka, let me eat in peace. . . .

MACCAVEYEV (*listening patiently to all of them*): Enough. Stop, my roosters. All that it means is that we will wait for Vasili to come in early winter. (*There is a silence. Victor goes to the balustrade.*)

MASHA: Did I hurt you, Soniushka?

RUCHKINA: I was thinking of your brother Issayka when I spoke.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Children, have you forgotten Issay?

MASHA: We called him, but he said he was busy.

RUCHKINA: I brought him an umbrella to fix for me. It is my fault. I will go and bring him here.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Don't let him trip on the stairs.

MASHA: Let me go with you, Soniushka. (*They go into the house through a door.*)

VICTOR: I see a stranger coming here. Yuri, is it not that man?

YURI (*quickly*): Where? Show me. Mama, we are not waiting for anybody else?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: No.

YURI: Come here for a minute. Do you know that man there among the apple trees?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: No, Yura. Remember what I told you. . . .

YURI: Don't excite yourself, Ma. Everything will turn out pleasantly. Come here, Anatoly.

MACCAVEYEV: Who else is there, Yura?

YURI (*dryly*): Pylyayev interprets the Maccaveyev hospitality rather broadly. He is getting ready to establish a club here. You have nothing to say against our taking a hand in this business? (*MACCAVEYEV goes to the balustrade, looks sideways at the door through which MASHA has gone out, returns to his former place, and sits down, silent.*) Anatoly, you will finish eating later.

ANATOLY (*coming over with his plate in his hand*): What's the matter, Commander?

YURI: Tell him, sonny, that we are waiting for nobody, and that he should go away from here.

ANATOLY: Aha! Well, just let me get at him.

VICTOR: He is smiling.

ANATOLY (*dividing the grapevines broadly with one movement*): Hey, you fiddle player. . . . Make chop-chop with your guitar out of this place. And fast.

VICTOR: He is smiling.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Don't insult him, Tolenka. Only tell him that no one is home.

ANATOLY: Let me go, Motherkin. I have an appetite for things like this. (*With the full consciousness of his own worth.*) Hey, you there with the serenade, when I speak a second time, I only say half and do the other half.

VICTOR: He is smiling.

ANATOLY: Somebody hold this plate. I will be back in a jiffy. Hey, catch them and sleep on them till I come downstairs. (*He rips the boxing gloves from the nail and throws them out over the balustrade. MACCAVEYEV closes the door leading to the house.*)

VICTOR: And quite a sympathetic smile, the devil take it. (*Swiftly takes the camera out of its case.*) Action, Camera. This will be a treasure for the family history.

ANATOLY: I'm on my way. (*He runs out and down, untying the belt of his dressing robe. And again, looking at everybody, MACCAVEYEV approaches the balustrade. The camera begins to click. YURI referees the fight from the terrace with growing curiosity.*)

YURI: That fellow has a pretty good technique. Break. . . . Anatoly, the first warning.

VICTOR: What wonderful light. I hope I have enough film. . . . Well, we can let that go by. It wouldn't be interesting for the general public. (*He photographs everything and everybody.*)

YURI: Grand. . . . Bravo. . . . Anatoly, shake the sand off your gloves. Pylyayev's boy will be sad tonight. (*Enter MASHA.*)

MASHA: Soniushka has run away. She feels bad; more's the pity. What's taking place here?

VICTOR: Nothing. . . . Here, stand this way. (*He kneels and turns the lens of the camera on her.*)

MASHA: But explain this to me.

YURI: Break.

VICTOR: Pylyayev called a guest here, and we set Anatoly on him. That is all, thank you.

MASHA (*looking into the orchard*): Yura, that is not the man. This is another man. I know him. (*She runs to her father.*) Papa, stop them. . . . There is a mistake here.

MACCAVEYEV (*holding her back by the sleeve*): Sit down here beside me, daughter. It is too late now.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Who is he, Mashenka? Adrian. . . .

MACCAVEYEV: He came here for Masha, mother. Everything is in order. Hold on to yourself, Sparrow. Well, where is Issayka?

MASHA (*twisting her hands*): He can't come now. His soldering iron is hot. He says it will rain this evening, and the umbrella will be needed. (*She loses control of herself.*) Yuri, stop it right now.

YURI: Wait, sister. Break. Anatoly, the second warning. Well, well, such things happen. One, two, three, four, five . . . (*He finishes counting the knockout with movements of his arm.*) So the bout is over. Where is his plate?

VICTOR (*rewinding the film*): And just in time. There is no more film. We were lucky, Sparrow.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Who beat whom, Yura? Tell me, who beat whom?

YURI: Maccaveyev is beaten, Victor.

VICTOR: So, there is someone abroad stronger than Maccaveyev. (*There is a silence. MASHA cannot choose an apple from the plate. A long pause. Up the stairs, one eyebrow split, and dragging his robe behind him, comes ANATOLY. He breathes heavily, and his shoulders glisten with sweat. Nobody looks at him.*)

ANATOLY: Well, I tried him out. The man is a light heavyweight, and (*almost with delight*) he has the sweetest right cross in the world.

You understand, Sparrow, first I made him retreat, and then he began to clinch . . .

YURI: Don't lie to your sister. It was you who started to clinch.

ANATOLY: You don't understand anything in boxing. You only know how to count ten. (*To VICTOR.*) Well, give me that film. I want to see it.

VICTOR: I won't give it to you, just to teach you a lesson. You spoke a little too much, champ. But I will sell it to the *Soviet Picture News*. . . .

MASHA (*giving ANATOLY a pitcher with water*): As I see, this was no Voskoboynikov. Go and wash yourself, Tolya.

ANATOLY: What men are lost among us and in vain. You could take this fellow, and teach him a little science, and then send him into the European ring. (*He goes to a corner of the terrace and pours some water into the palm of his hand.*) Nevertheless, he is going away, the one with the serenade. (*And somehow everybody is sorry that the man is going away, and perhaps forever.*)

MACCAVEYEV: Why are you standing there, innocent, with downcast eyes? Go, ask your man to come into the house. . . .

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Mashenka, there is an extra place here. I was expecting Vasili.

YURI: Show him to us, sister. This is becoming interesting. (*It costs MASHA great effort not to run after the man, but she remembers that everybody is looking at her.*)

MASHA (*moving aside the net of the grapevines*): Listen, Otshelnikov. I am calling you. Come up here. It was all a misunderstanding. My father is calling you.

ALL: Is he returning? . . . Is he coming back? . . . Run down and get him. . . .

ANATOLY: He is coming. (*All except MACCAVEYEV rise in expectation. The newcomer comes up the stairway to the terrace. He wears a white shirt and army boots. His jacket is slung over his arm. The clean and quick grace of his movements strikes the eye at once. MASHA guiltily takes two steps in his direction. The two speak as if nobody else were present.*)

MASHA: There was a terrible misunderstanding.

OTSHELNIKOV: I understood that. And I was ready to leave myself, but I didn't like the form in which the request was made.

MASHA: You conducted yourself properly. But there was a misunderstanding here about the manner in which you entered.

OTSHELNIKOV: The gates were open.

MASHA: Why didn't the dogs bark? Do you carry sugar with you just for such occasions?

OTSHELNIKOV (*laughing with his eyes alone*): It seems that the dogs guessed that I was expected. (MASHA *bites her lips*.) I saw you for the first time in Tushin, on the eighteenth of August when you were doing a parachute jump. Vasili pointed you out to me.

(*There is general movement. MACCAVEYEV gropes about himself for something.*)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA (*whispering*): Mashenka, light of the evening.

(*The three brothers look at one another seriously.*)

MASHA: You made a mistake. You took me for someone else. Vasili lived only on the eighth floor, and yet I was afraid to look down from his balcony. I am afraid of heights.

OTSHELNIKOV (*understanding and smiling*): You are right. I met you the first time on the stairway. I did not know that you were Vasili's sister.

MASHA: You could have asked him about me on the next day.

OTSHELNIKOV: I thought it would be strange to ask a friend about a girl who was visiting him at such a late hour.

VICTOR: But introduce us, Sparrow.

MASHA: These are my brothers, my father and mother. Come and meet them.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: You will be a welcome guest, young man. And our bear didn't hurt you? What is his name, Mashenka?

OTSHELNIKOV: My family name is Otshelnikov. They call me Alexey Dmitrievich. (*He makes the rounds of the family.*)

YURI: Your boxing is first class. Where did you learn the sport?

OTSHELNIKOV: In the Army.

VICTOR: Very descriptive, Alexey Dmitrievich. Simple and unassuming.

OTSHELNIKOV: All of it was simple chance. Your brother fought with the sun in his eyes. (*To ANATOLY.*) Don't be angry at me, friend.

ANATOLY: You have confused me terribly.

OTSHELNIKOV: Nelson advised not to hold the enemy in disdain, so as not to lessen your attention to his actions. (*In a friendly manner he straightens out a fold in ANATOLY's robe. To ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA.*) Your daughter is the best of all girls. Your sons are fine fellows.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Mothers do not argue in such cases. Excuse us, we were expecting an evil man. We are so glad, so glad that it happened this way. And this is her father, Adrian Timofeyevich. (*OTSHELNIKOV bows. MACCAVEYEV sits, immovable, and does not stretch out his hand.*)

MACCAVEYEV: A fine bridegroom, forcing his way into the house.

OTSHELNIKOV: It wasn't exactly as you put it. Vasili invited me to come with him, but his journey was called off. I am a friend of Vasili's.

MACCAVEYEV: My Vaska is very careful in the choice of his friends. I remember that he was even critical of the multiplication table.

MASHA: Vaska is brave, and one of ours. He will pioneer a path, and tomorrow millions will follow in his footsteps.

MACCAVEYEV: What is he good for, your Vaska?

OTSHELNIKOV (*to MASHA*): Let me shake your hand for my friend. (*To MACCAVEYEV.*) The friendship of Vasili is worth a great deal. And it would be a mistake not to labor for it.

MACCAVEYEV (*jeeringly*): I am his father.

OTSHELNIKOV: That is not enough. A friend is more. (*From the orchard come the voices of RUCHKINA and DUSSYA.*)

RUCHKINA and DUSSYA: Maccaveyevs, to the field of battle . . . Maccaveyevs . . .

YURI: We are being called, father. We are going down into the orchard.

VICTOR: We will wait for you, Otshehnikov, in the volleyball court. (*MASHA shows him her tongue.*)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: I pressed your clothes, Tolya. Go and dress yourself. (*YURI and VICTOR go down into the orchard. ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA and ANATOLY go into the house.*)

OTSHELNIKOV: By the way, I dined today with Sergey Maccaveyev. He asks to be remembered by all who know him. He is a fine commander and a real Maccaveyev.

MACCAVEYEV (*pleased, and winking at MASHA*): I see that you like the Maccaveyevs. What are you hiding your eyes for?

OTSHELNIKOV: I didn't understand what you meant. It seems that I am still young and inexperienced. (*MACCAVEYEV is confused by this clear and cold simplicity.*)

MASHA: Do you play volleyball, Otshehnikov? Then let us go. Come down to see us, Papa. (*MASHA and OTSHELNIKOV turn to go.*)

MACCAVEYEV: Stop. . . . Who are you after all . . . you there, strong and graceful and with never a mistake?

OTSHELNIKOV: I am in the service. In the military service. In the same department with Vasili. But I have a furlough, and so . . . (*In this way he explains his civilian clothing. He and MASHA go into the orchard. There is a long pause. ISSAYKA comes out of the house, carrying a closed umbrella.*)

ISSAYKA: Has Sofya Nikolayevna gone away already? And I was in a hurry. . . . (*He approaches MACCAVEYEV, noiselessly puts down his crutches, and sits down.*) Well, I read all the papers. Shall I make my report? (*There is a pause. The hollow, faraway noise of the maneuvers in the distance breaks in on the silence of the terrace.*) In Spain the Republicans have moved forward along the railroad line. Here, take a look at the map. . . .

MACCAVEYEV (*gently pushing aside ISSAYKA's hand and the newspaper, and looking after MASHA and OTSHELNIKOV*): Don't fly away, Sparrow . . .

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

A lower, corner terrace of the Maccaveyev house, much smaller than the upper terrace. Two short flights of stairs lead down into the orchard. An apple tree, pruned to resemble a basket filled with fruit, intrudes from the left. It is night. The moon divides the space into equal halves of light and shadow. On the shadowed side, on two benches put together, amidst piled-up orchard and household articles, there sleeps, covered with a sheep-skin coat, ISSAYKA. From the house come outbursts of laughter and music. MACCAVEYEV is entertaining guests in honor of the arrival of his children. On the light portion of the terrace are UNUSS and RUCHKINA. They do not know that they are not alone. Faraway thunder grows and fades. RUCHKINA touches the hand of UNUSS, drawing his attention to the thunder.

RUCHKINA: I love the coming of a rainstorm. When all bends and bows to the rain. And the rain comes, kind, thirst-assuaging, heavy. . . .

UNUSS: No, that is the sound of the Blues advancing. Tonight there will be a battle. (ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA, *very happy, opens the door from the house, and stands framed in the light.*)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Sofya Nikolayevna, where are you? Come, it is your turn to play, Soniushka.

RUCHKINA: I have stopped playing. And the air here is fresher. I will come in a little later. (ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA *goes into the house, closing the door behind her.*) How young the Maccaveyevs have become. Their children have come home. What terrible strength every joy carries in itself! Would you like to be eighteen years old again, Unuss?

UNUSS: No.

RUCHKINA: It would be too much trouble to be eighteen, I suppose.

UNUSS: The wisdom of the apple tree, I think, is in its fruits.

RUCHKINA: Of course. And does anything except apple trees exist for you in this world?

UNUSS: Yes. You know it. I love you.

RUCHKINA (*looking around*): Don't talk about it. . . . Apple trees.

. . . If you only grew figs on poison ivy plants. Of course, that is impossible, but it would be interesting. But the apple remains sweet even without your attention.

UNUSS: The apple of tomorrow must be sweeter than the apple of yesterday.

RUCHKINA: Nothing can be said against that. I read your biography. In the Civil War, when everybody was fighting for our happiness, which will come to us so many years later, so many years later . . . you guarded your orchards that they should not be chopped up into stove fuel. Strekopytov has told me that you even barked like a dog at night to scare passers-by away. Won't you let me hear how, quietly?

UNUSS: I thought that our great tomorrow would begin with the orchard. (*There is the sound of a flying plane and then the approaching recitative of machine-gun fire.*)

RUCHKINA: And then—there is Vasili Maccaveyev. I have never seen him grown up, but I see his large, rough-cut face with the clever, masterful eyes more clearly than I see yours. Here we are, the two of us. Inside that house they are trying the new cider. And somewhere in the thick darkness, he is going forward, always forward, and the icy water laps against the sides of the submarine. Maccaveyev passes through the ocean unseen, and hundreds of thousands of mothers and brothers and sisters listen to his footsteps. But who listens to mine?

UNUSS: Those whom you have prepared for life. Brigadiers, chairmen of village Soviets, soldiers on the frontiers of our motherland. And they are the people, Soniushka.

RUCHKINA: Here I am, scolding you, and nothing ever existed for me except my children. The children of others.

UNUSS: It is necessary that your own should be born all the quicker. I love you.

RUCHKINA: Stop singing your serenades. . . . People will see us. Tell me, Irod, were you ever mixed up in a scandal? At least once in your life?

UNUSS: Oh, yes.

RUCHKINA: Where, and how did it happen?

UNUSS: When I studied in the Institute there was a young fellow there who lied very insultingly about strange women. Once I came near to him and looked at him as if he were very low. . . . And then I left him where he was. The pity of it was that he did not understand me. I have never betrayed the rule not to strike people.

RUCHKINA: That is very much like you. What nonsense, as Dusska says. (*Jeeringly she hands him a thick piece of knotty wood lying on the balustrade.*) Here, break this for me. (*He holds it at arm's length and breaks it easily.*) That must have been a piece of rotten wood. People are coming here. Let us run, my eternal bridegroom. (*They go into the orchard. The door of the house opens. DUSSYA drags VICTOR out on the terrace by the hand.*)

VICTOR: Dussya, I am afraid of the darkness. And my tea is unfinished.

DUSSYA: Come quicker, or he will drag along with us. Listen to the advice of a mature and suffering woman. Do not tie yourself up with old people.

VICTOR: Dussenka, I left a whole saucer of honey untouched inside there.

DUSSYA: No words, no speeches. Wipe your lips, so. Now quickly kiss your auntie for her good advice. Wait, what is that there? . . . Ah, no—it is only the moonlight playing. Oh, how it frightened me. At night I am afraid even of myself. Listen, something is happening to my heart. . . . Give me your hand.

VICTOR: I will not.

DUSSYA: What are you afraid of? It is a very little heart, and it doesn't bite.

VICTOR: Your finger nails are . . . electric.

DUSSYA: Quiet. Silence is the speech of love. (*Suddenly.*) Enough, you forget yourself. Oh, somebody else is here. (*She moves her hand in the darkness.*) It is something furry. . . . No, it is Issay, sleeping. Hush, don't wake him. (*The door opens again.*) Come down with me to the orchard, quietly. (*She quickly runs down into the orchard. ANATOLY is framed in the doorway.*)

ANATOLY: Dussya, where are you hiding? Come, it is your time to lead.

VICTOR: Someone is sleeping here. Don't wake him. By the way, give Strekopytov the high sign that we have gone into the orchard. I am using my last strength to protect myself.

ANATOLY: Send her to the devil.

VICTOR: She will only cry. And she threatens to tell her husband that I have seduced her. While I, you understand . . .

ANATOLY: All right. Go on. I can understand. (*ANATOLY goes back in the house. VICTOR goes down to the orchard. For a moment, only the sleeping ISSAYKA is on the terrace. All that is heard is the music from the house and the noises of the night. Someone seems to hide in the vicinity. Someone seems to find somebody. Then ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA and PYLYAYEV come out of the house. He is slightly drunk. The door remains open.*)

PYLYAYEV: What do you need me for? Well, you can charm me now.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: I have never seen you like this. (*She tries to talk more gently.*) When you are a little under the influence, you don't at all resemble yourself when sober. I see that you like our apple cider.

PYLYAYEV: Make it shorter. (*There is a silence. Somebody in the house recites one of Krylov's fables as a punishment in a guessing game. ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA closes the door.*)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: I have brought you the money for your journey.

PYLYAYEV: Well, give it to me.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Don't unwrap it. Take it as it is, with the handkerchief. It is an old one anyway. Nobody knows about it. . . . And it isn't necessary to return it.

PYLYAYEV: How much is there in it?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: A hundred. It is Issayka's money. He will pardon me. Well, good-bye. . . . (*She offers him her hand.*)

PYLYAYEV: What are you doing—paying me for a half-son? (*After a minute's thought he puts the handkerchief with the money into his*

pocket.) Pylyayev has become cheap. I remember how once in a little monastery near Balta two monks stole ten cartridge boxes from me and how I discovered them. . . . But even mountains must fall. (*Takes hold of the door handle.*) Is that all?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: When will you go away?

PYLYAYEV: How shall I say it to you? . . . I don't know.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: You promised. Can't you understand? They are all looking at you and saying nothing. And you yourself have become nervous. You seem to be listening for something. You always disappear somewhere.

PYLYAYEV: It is six years now that I have been running without a stop, Sashka. I have become a regular race horse. But there is nowhere where I can run. (*There is a silence.*) Nobody has come to see me in these days?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: That's just it. You are waiting for someone. And I don't even know what you are now . . . a runaway or a pardoned man. I haven't slept since you have been here. Go away, Matvey; let us live.

PYLYAYEV: Well, don't cry. It isn't necessary. (*Comes nearer.*) Don't push me away. As it is I am standing on the edge of a precipice.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA (*in a whisper*): Have the courage to go away yourself, entirely, if you were not able to succeed. What is it that you want of life? Tell me.

PYLYAYEV: I could easily shoot myself, but I don't want to cause you any unpleasantness. (*He touches her shoulder.*) Pylyayev does not take his words back. I will go away. But I can't do it right now. Wait till tomorrow, Sasha.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Good. . . . But don't force me to the last measure, Matvey.

PYLYAYEV: What last measure?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: I will chase you away. . . . I will set the dogs on you.

PYLYAYEV: Nonsense, you are too soft to do that. And you will be afraid of your husband. (*There is a silence.*) Tell me: that impudent boy on the crutches . . . is that he?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: No. What are you saying? . . . Your son died when he was a baby. He is Adrian's son.

PYLYAYEV: You lie, Sashka. You could never do it. You lacked the technique. . . . (*She covers her face with her hands. ISSAYKA, who has awakened and heard part of the conversation, throws the sheepskin coat on the floor.*)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Issayka!

ISSAYKA: Mama, slap his face . . . Mama. Hit him. I can't reach him. Mama, give me my crutches, Mama . . .

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA (*rushing to him*): Issay, quieter, darling little old man, don't shout.

ISSAYKA: I am strong enough. Look at my hands. I have strong hands. Help me . . . help me get at him.

PYLYAYEV: Listen to the voice from an outlying province. (*He turns, and goes out very slowly.*)

ISSAYKA: Don't cry, Mama. I order you not to cry. Why did you ever let him go? Overtake him, it is not too late yet. Overtake him.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA (*caressing his hands*): Issay, all this was a dream. You are a little boy, and you dreamt it. All is well, Issay. (*In a whisper.*) Maccaveyev has a bad heart. Quiet yourself, quiet yourself, my dear . . .

ISSAYKA: Mama, how could you ever love such a man? (*The door of the house opens, and a GUEST shows himself in the doorway.*)

THE GUEST: Aleksandra Ivanovna, they are waiting for you. Your guests are organizing a revolt.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: I am coming, I am coming. . . . (*The GUEST goes into the house.*) You rest here. I will go in, or they will notice something amiss. Yuri said that if you can be fixed up he will take you with him. You sleep now, and when you awaken, all will be Moscow and the morning.

ISSAYKA: You are all so good to me. (*The same GUEST appears in the doorway again.*)

GUEST: Aleksandra Ivanovna, they will break the dishes if you don't come.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA (*rising and rubbing her face with her hands*):

I am coming, I am coming. (*She goes to the door.*) My, how much smoke there is here. You ought to go out into the fresh air. (*She and the GUEST go into the house. For a while ISSAYKA remains alone. OTSHELNIKOV looks into the terrace from the orchard.*)

ISSAYKA: She isn't here. This is her brother, Issayka.

OTSHELNIKOV: I see. Why are you lying here alone?

ISSAYKA: Yuri took away my crutches, to punish me as if I were a little boy. And I felt insulted . . . eh, Otshelnikov . . .

OTSHELNIKOV: What, Issayka?

ISSAYKA: They all think that I don't belong to this world. But I belong to the world, to the everyday world. I want a great deal, I want to fly, I want to fight. Oh, if I only had good legs I would pay someone both for Mama and for Spain. I gave myself a time limit—I would wait two years, and then . . . and now this time limit is drawing to its end. Shall I tell you a secret, Otshelnikov?

OTSHELNIKOV: If you can say it out loud.

ISSAYKA: Give me your ear. I am jealous of Vaska. He was entrusted with machines, and the honor of the nation, and I was entrusted with an umbrella. And yet, I fixed it.

OTSHELNIKOV: These words are unnecessary, Issay. No one among us seeks for the extraordinary deed. We do it as a matter of everyday life. What are they doing to cure you?

ISSAYKA: Whatever they can. Some days ago Mossey rubbed me with lard and ground horse-radish. And I lay there, feeling tickled and funny. "You forgot to add bay leaves," I said. Soon, very soon, someone will invent a medicine that will cure everything, and it will be so strong that no bottle will hold it. It will melt the glass. And I will drink it and everything in me will straighten out . . . And then I will rise to my full height, the seventh Maccaveyev.

OTSHELNIKOV: Carefully now, or you will fall and hurt yourself. And now, what was Aleksandra Ivanovna crying about? I saw her eyes.

ISSAYKA: The Maccaveyevs do not cry.

OTSHELNIKOV: So. Well, and what was Pylyayev doing here?

ISSAYKA: I did not see him. I was asleep. (*There is a silence.* OTSHEL-

NIKOV *rises to go.*) But later I woke up. He is waiting for someone here. . . .

OTSHELNIKOV: Yes, Yuri explained to me why my welcome here was so original. . . . *(They sit in silence. There is the twang of a guitar. ANATOLY passes by, singing.)*

ANATOLY:

Mama's asleep, the night is deep, my heart is grieving . . .

It sadly says, one of these days you will be leaving . . .

(He stops, looks into the terrace, and speaks quietly to OTSHELNIKOV.) Pylyayev has run to the gates again. But no one has been there so far. *(He continues to walk, into the orchard, singing.)* My darling sweetheart's lonely ghost has come to tell me all is lost . . . *(His voice dies away in the orchard.)*

OTSHELNIKOV *(looking at his watch)*: All is as well as could be. But don't be jealous of Vasili. You shouldn't.

ISSAYKA: I am not jealous of him, but of his freedom of movement. When a man goes forward . . . and the sparkling icy air beats against his breast . . .

OTSHELNIKOV: What kind of sparkling air! We are submarine men, Issay. We travel in the depths, and our air smells of burnt oil. Well, I will go to look for Masha. *(The door of the house opens. The guests there have all risen. Chairs are being moved about. Outcries: "Intermission, eight minutes . . ." "Tea, who wants tea?" And at last a bass voice: "In view of the thickening of the atmosphere, the continuation of the lecture will take place in the open air." The first to come out on the terrace is a tall old man with hanging mustaches, dressed in a French summer tunic, and wearing boots. This is ZHABRO.)*

ZHABRO *(coughing)*: My, but it has piled up. There are no ladies here? *(He unbuttons his tunic, disclosing his powerfully muscled torso.)* It is as cool here as on the bottom of the sea. Irod Antonovich, let us put three tables here. Come on.

UNUSS *(appearing, all hung with stools)*: Your lecture audience is leaving already.

ZHABRO: That's nothing. They will come back later. Hey, Platon, drag the necessary instruments out here. *(STREKOPYTOV squeezes*

through the door with a *ķeg* which is crowned with a wreath, under his arm. Glass steins hang on his fingers. In the darkness, he bumps into OTSHELNIKOV.)

STREKOPYTOV: Kasper Kasperovich, this place is already taken.

OTSHELNIKOV: We are leaving right now. Issay, help me find Masha.

ZHABRO: Allow me . . . candidate of veterinary science, and an old friend of Maccaveyev, Zhabro. That is my family name. (*He coughs thunderously.*) My, but it has piled up, the devil take it. I have arrived here to greet the young generation. Well, sir?

OTSHELNIKOV (*in a friendly manner*): I always find it a pleasure to meet the friends of Adrian Timofeyevich.

ZHABRO: So. We are studying a mysterious beverage called cider, and its results. Without sparing our weaknesses.

UNUSS: From a scientifically medicinal point of view.

STREKOPYTOV: The weather is breathless. The sky is clear. Glory to the creators of the earth and the forest. (*They stand before OTSHELNIKOV in a row, all three in various stages of high spirits.*)

ZHABRO: You must notice that we are doing it with the full presence and open demonstration of the study material. (*He strikes the bottom of the ķeg.*) Meanwhile you set the glasses. (*STREKOPYTOV relieves UNUSS of the stools and sets the glasses on one of them. PYLYAYEV appears on one of the stairways leading up from the orchard.*)

OTSHELNIKOV: I am sorry that we were late for your beginning, and will not be able to join you in full measure. Take my arm, Issay.

ISSAYKA: Yuri will scold me.

OTSHELNIKOV: That's all right. I will take the full blame. (*Jestingly he hands ISSAYKA's sheepskin to ZHABRO.*) Will you be so good as to take care of this thing for a little while? (*He and ISSAYKA go into the orchard.*)

ZHABRO (*looking at the sheepskin*): Well, sir . . .

PYLYAYEV (*leaning against one of the pillars of the terrace*): Hold it tighter, or it will crawl away. (*ZHABRO silently puts the sheepskin on the bench. A group of young people, crowding each other, run from the house to the orchard.*)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA (*inside house*): Children, where are you running? What about the tea?

VOICES: We are going to bathe, Aleksandra Ivanovna. (STREKOPYTOV *looks fixedly into the faces of the passing girls.*)

PYLYAYEV: Don't look for your wife, Menelaus. She is occupied with someone else just now.

STREKOPYTOV: This is the third time that you rub me the wrong way, Matvey Fomich. I'll be breaking your neck yet.

ZHABRO: Don't pay any attention to him. He is a fool. Let's sit down without him and slake our thirst. (*He coughs so hard that everybody looks at him.*) Why are you all staring at me like that?

STREKOPYTOV: Why, the essence of it is, that your spinal column will fly out of you one day if you go on like that, Kasper Kasperovich.

ZHABRO: That is technically impossible. But let us continue our seminar. Are all the glasses filled? At what point did we stop? (ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA *comes out on the terrace.*) Honor, and the first place at the board.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: I have come only for one minute. I can't believe my eyes when I see you playing like little children . . . Adrian has gone somewhere . . . (*She goes to the stairs. PYLYAYEV moves aside.*)

PYLYAYEV (*sotto voce*): Nobody came for me there, Aleksandra Ivanovna?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: No, that was the postman. (*She calls into the orchard.*) Adrian . . . (*There is no answer. She returns into the house, making a gesture that asks the others to remain where they are.*)

ZHABRO (*speaking to STREKOPYTOV*): Friends and students. In the introductory lecture, we examined together with you that botanical and poetic part of our subject. We promenaded in the orchards and debated where all the fruit would go when Adrian Timofeyevich fulfilled his threat of turning the entire region into one great orchard. Thus we arrived at cider. At present it behooves us to study the common symptoms of the sickish state of being usually called drunkenness. And so, poisons are medicines, and medicines are poisons . . .

STREKOPYTOV (*monotonously*): As Claude Bernard said.

ZHABRO: As Claude Bernard said. Irod Antonovich Unuss has the floor.

UNUSS: And so, we examined the mysterious process in which the labor of man, of the apple tree, and of a microscopic spore, forms this marvelous liquid. This is not your terrible pepper vodka, Comrade Strekopytov. This is the juice of the earth of Polovchansk, as innocent as youth. Here are added the flowers and the songs, here are melted the sunsets and the nights of our land. Let everybody drink it and see in it the face of one he loves. Let us now put it to the proof of a final examination, to find out what it is, and how it is made. (*They all drink.*)

STREKOPYTOV: Each swallow of it glides down and waits for its fellow. (*Pause. He takes up his stein again.*) Let us enter into the spirit once more.

UNUSS: Now let us watch the mechanism of its action. Taken inward through the mouth, this liquid, through the motivity of its own weight, flows through a given large pipe here, and then through the aid of various small pipettes thirstily . . . pardon me, I wanted to say thirstily soaks into the organism.

ZHABRO: As Claude Bernard said. (*Laughing.*) Very like it, very like it. Pile it on thicker.

UNUSS: Diseases, for instance even the incurable cough of Comrade Zhabro, pass without leaving any traces. There is formed a flood tide of blood to the ganglia of the brain, to the liver . . . and let us also say to whole series of secondary organs. (*To STREKOPYTOV.*) Do you feel it?

ZHABRO: Irod, my friend Irod, the liver is not on that side.

UNUSS: There appears a warmth in the stomach, the pulse becomes stronger, one wants to eat. Brain activity is enlivened, as you may easily see with your own eyes in the example of Matvey Fomich Pylyayev. (*As if suddenly awakened, PYLYAYEV approaches them, and pours himself a stein.*)

PYLYAYEV: What time is it now, Platon Platonovich?

STREKOPYTOV: Ten o'clock. (*PYLYAYEV goes back to the pillar.*)

UNUSS: But we are deepening the experiment we have undertaken,

to follow the full action of this, as some of the ignorant mistakenly call it, poison, to the very end. (*When their steins are already lifted, MACCAVEYEV comes in from the orchard. His hands hang at his sides. A folded newspaper sticks out of his jacket pocket. The sleeve of his white holiday jacket in the dust. He stops and looks unseeingly past his guests.*)

ZHABRO: Join our circle. It isn't too late yet. (*They notice MACCAVEYEV's strange behavior. They are silent. There is music in the house.*) Adrian, did you fall again? . . . Is there anything wrong with your heart? Sit down. Sit down.

STREKOPYTOV: Adrian Timofeyevich, come to yourself. Drink a little of this. . . . I think we ought to call Aleksandra Ivanovna.

MACCAVEYEV (*weakly raising his hand*): No, it isn't necessary. That music isn't necessary. (*There is a panic. UNUSS runs into the house and drags out a standing electric lamp on a long cord. The music stops.*)

STREKOPYTOV: I always told you . . . Adrian Timofeyevich, to take care of yourself, accurately.

ZHABRO: He has been moody all evening. Always saying: "Our gathering is not complete, it is not complete." And why not complete? He has given fourteen hands to the world. Just take a look: his sons—there is a whole race of them. And what sons!

STREKOPYTOV: Seven of them, as in the Bible. (*MACCAVEYEV stands without hearing them.*)

PYLYAYEV (*putting his empty stein on the balustrade*): He is active and loves his work, Adrian does. He never lost any time in vain with his wife. (*There is almost a panic. STREKOPYTOV covers his face with his hands. ZHABRO turns away. MACCAVEYEV goes slowly to PYLYAYEV, who becomes frightened of him.*)

MACCAVEYEV: Who is here? I know the voice, but I can't see you. Ah, it is you, Matvey. (*And he goes out into the orchard. A group of guests, returning from bathing, parts before him. There is a pause. The guests look inquisitively at UNUSS. The latter rises.*)

UNUSS (*hoarsely*): And so, we continue our lecture. We are faced with the examination of the retroactive process of sobering up. (*He*

moves towards PYLYAYEV. The latter notices him too late to avoid him.)

PYLYAYEV: Don't touch me . . . Don't excite me, tree doctor.

UNUSS: Quiet. Quiet. Now, give me your nose. (*His hand travels over PYLYAYEV's face.*) Don't break up our lecture. (*He grips the nose and squeezes.*) Attention. I apply a light pressure . . .

PYLYAYEV: Let me go. You hurt me.

UNUSS: And now consciousness awakens, memory returns in shame and in pain, the darkness disappears. I increase the pressure . . . Your attention, please . . .

ZHABRO (*at his side*): His hand is like a vise. You must have inhuman strength in your fingers.

STREKOPYTOV: Irod Antonovich, he is bleeding. Sofya Nikolayevna, Sofya Nikolayevna, tell him . . .

RUCHKINA (*passing through the crowd of guests*): What are you doing? . . . You have beaten him up? . . .

UNUSS: Oh no, I have never struck a man. (*He looks with contempt at his hands.*) Let me have your handkerchief.

(*His voice thundering, ZHABRO tells ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA, who has just come in, about what has happened. STREKOPYTOV runs into the orchard to look for his wife. The stage turns. Apple trees, apple trees without an end.*)

STREKOPYTOV: Dussya, Dussenka, I have missed you so much. Answer me, only once. (*STREKOPYTOV is lost in the orchard, and those whom he seeks are directly in front of the footlights. Two apple trees have intertwined their branches above a pond. On a bench under the trees, sit VICTOR and DUSSYA.*)

DUSSYA (*listening to her husband's cries*): Even at night I imagine that squeaking voice.

VICTOR: Let me say but one word, citizeness.

DUSSYA: My, but you are talkative.

VICTOR: You are of course, a treasure. . . .

DUSSYA (*rapidly*): Oh, it isn't necessary for you to say that. I am married and I love my husband. He is so sensitive. He even hears when he is asleep. Like a dog. On the day you arrived I did not yet

know what was fated to happen, but he was already jealous. These are simply the attacks of old age. By the way, talking of attacks, you promised me a seance of hypnotism. Keep in mind that I am easily influenced. That is what one doctor told me. To tell the truth, he is not a doctor, but an agriculturist, but he has a cousin who is a doctor. No, his cousin is a pharmacist. And he has a bald head. He died when I was a very little girl, so little . . . (*She brings together the tips of two fingers, and touches VICTOR's lips.*) How is it that I remember him so well? Well, I don't know myself. Why don't you begin? Take my hand. (*VICTOR looks around, listening to STREKOPYTOV's far-off cries.*) Why is he howling like that? It only makes me think of things. Well, I am ready.

VICTOR: But you must remember, it is bad for the health.

DUSSYA: It's all right, nobody dies of it. Just the opposite. . . . I am already beginning to feel something—a tickling electric sensation in the knees. . . . Should that happen?

VICTOR: That is too early. And don't crowd me so. I want you to remember that my jacket is dyed, and the dye runs. And so, you think yourself to be a little bird . . . your feathers glisten. And you want . . .

DUSSYA: My eyes are closing. Should that happen?

VICTOR: Don't short-circuit the flow. . . . And what you want to do, precious little bird, is to fly home and drink tea with the cake that Aleksandra Ivanovna baked, and then sleep till the sun rises, may the devil take it all.

DUSSYA (*putting her hands on his shoulders*): Oh, I let you do it only because you caught me entirely unprepared. The scent of the apples makes me drunk. We shouldn't sit here.

VICTOR: Dussya, I certainly never influenced you to do this. I will become angry, Dussya . . .

DUSSYA: Tell me, are you an altruist?

VICTOR: N-no, rather I am a radio engineer.

DUSSYA: So. Then take me away somewhere on a great ocean liner. And let all its eight smokestacks lay down such a smoke screen that no one should know . . .

VICTOR: That is impossible. There are no such ocean liners.

DUSSYA: But you yourself called me a treasure.

VICTOR: You didn't let me finish. I said that you were a treasure for eternal bachelors, but I . . . I am engaged to be married. I even have two girls to whom I am engaged. And one of them, as soon as she sees you, will begin shooting at me. Jealousy. Besides that, I have four children on the side. . . . Well, she doesn't like it.

DUSSYA: Then why did you tempt me? And I believed that you would show me people and mountains and great cities. I will leave Strekopytov. I will leave him anyway. When I married him, I did so to revenge myself against a man who . . . In one word, I hate him even more than I hate you. . . .

VICTOR: You should keep that priceless feeling in yourself, keep it always.

DUSSYA: Listen, my radio engineer, take me away, even if it isn't very far . . .

VICTOR: No. *N* as in *Nikolay*, *O* as in *Ossip*. No.

DUSSYA: A fine bird, and I believed him. Tempted me with God knows what, and now backtracks. There, my husband is calling again. Let us run at least as far as that bench over there. (*Again she drags him into the shadows of the orchard. Enter STREKOPYTOV.*)

STREKOPYTOV: Dussya, I have something for you. Dussya. (*He looks behind every bush.*) Victor Adrianich, she is tempting you, but don't you surrender. They are still. They have stopped talking. . . . Dussya, I have already forgiven you. I know everything. Dussya. (*Remembers MASHA's words.*) Old man of the sea, where is your thickest of beards? . . . I see you. I see you. . . . (*He runs out, and his sad outcries are heard disappearing in the distance. MASHA and OTSHELNIKOV enter.*)

MASHA: Let us sit down. When I was a little girl I used to run on the bottom of this pond. They were digging it at that time. You are very silent tonight, Alexey Dmitrievich.

OTSHELNIKOV: There are hours when one must be silent.

MASHA: What you said is a very correct but a very boring remark. Pick one of the apples and give it to me. (*The first apple OTSHELNIKOV picks falls out of his hand and rolls into the pond. He picks another.*)

Everything falls out of your hands today. I don't recognize Otshelnikov.

OTSHELNIKOV: Neither do I.

MASHA: Are you ill?

OTSHELNIKOV: Men in the service are never sick. You know that very well.

MASHA: That can only mean that you offer another conundrum. I can't understand. . . . You chased me so many days. And at last you have me here. And there is nobody near us. And there is moonlight. And the bench is still warm from the couple who were just here.

OTSHELNIKOV: You find it strange that I looked for this interview?

MASHA: Then explain yourself. Read me verses. Tell me that I have a beautiful forehead. And that my hands are nice, and the nape of my neck. And my name. I suppose that this is what happens in cases like this. I read about it in the pre-war novels.

OTSHELNIKOV: Yes, you have a beautiful forehead. And your hands are lovely and warm. And your name. If any of these words give you joy . . .

MASHA: Hurrah, at last you are in motion. Take this apple as a reward for your pains. I have spoiled it by biting into it. But they say that a cherry bitten by a sparrow is the sweeter for it. Take it. I am not Eve. I don't want anything from you. (*He takes it. There is a silence.*) We don't yet know each other so well that we can be silent without any let-up.

OTSHELNIKOV: You are doubly dear to me. You are the sister of Vasili.

MASHA: And does that explain your liking for me?

OTSHELNIKOV: That explains my double love for you.

MASHA: Well, all right, let us be silent. (*There is a pause.*) I like your friendship with Vasili. It is a pity that he did not come. Do you think that his expedition is dangerous?

OTSHELNIKOV: Its danger is equal to its honor.

MASHA: And if the expedition is unsuccessful, and Vasili returns a failure . . . Of course, that is impossible, but yet . . .

OTSHELNIKOV: The people will send a second and a third and a fifth. There are things, Masha, which must be performed.

MASHA: I understand. And then that second or third or fifth may be you?

OTSHELNIKOV: I am afraid that does not depend on me. I am only a feather in the wing of a gigantic bird.

MASHA: That was very well put. A feather in the wing of a gigantic bird. You have something in common with Vaska. Not in the face, no . . .

OTSHELNIKOV (*almost dryly*). Vasili was better than I am. Otherwise he would not have been sent first.

MASHA: Why do you say he was? Now you are silent again.

OTSHELNIKOV (*rising*): There has been a great disaster, Masha.

MASHA: I don't understand. . . . Tell me.

OTSHELNIKOV: In the newspapers I received just now, there is a short notice from our comrades. Masha, control yourself. . . . Masha . . . (*She guesses and covers her mouth with her hand to prevent herself from screaming.*)

MASHA: No, it could not have happened. I know Vaska . . . But no matter what has happened to him, is he still alive? (*ISSAYKA, who has come in, has heard the last part of the dialogue.*) Issayka, dear Issayka . . .

OTSHELNIKOV: We must tell your father. It would be best if you did it.

MASHA: Let me see the notice. Let me.

OTSHELNIKOV (*giving her the newspaper*): There, on the last page.

MASHA (*wrinkling the paper as she holds it*): At his battle post . . . our dear comrade . . . was lost . . . The work lives on . . . signatures . . . that is all. I will go to Maccaveyev. Alyosha, stay with us tonight.

OTSHELNIKOV: It would be better if you called him here. Don't tell him in front of everybody. (*She goes out.*) Well, do you still want Vasili's service?

ISSAYKA: I should like to share it half and half. Let me sit down, Otshehnikov. I am tired. (*They sit side by side. OTSHELNIKOV draws*

on the sand at his feet with a dry twig.) He never even forgot Mossey . . . there was always a kind word for the old man in his letters . . . there was enough of him for everything and everybody. . . . Look how the lightning plays. And do you hear the thunder?

OTSHELNIKOV: The army is marching, Issay. Our motherland prepares for battle.

ISSAYKA: Well, this time there will be a thunderstorm. The air is so hard you can almost touch it. (*Suddenly moving forward with his whole body.*) Seryozha, Seryozha has come home.

OTSHELNIKOV: You stay just as you are, Issay. (*He rises to meet SERGEY MACCAVEYEV, who comes in, dressed in the uniform of a tank officer.*) It is good that you have found time to come. This is the right moment.

SERGEY: I was certain that I should meet Alyoshka here. Well, how are you?

OTSHELNIKOV: Did you read the notice?

SERGEY: How often we lose our best men before the most decisive conflict. (*To ISSAYKA.*) Don't get up. I am coming right over to you.

ISSAYKA: You were the only one, the only one we didn't expect, Seryozha. Sit down here with me. I see, I see that you are in a hurry. (*Touching his sleeve.*) Just look at our Seryozha . . . gold on his sleeve.

SERGEY: Does father know already?

OTSHELNIKOV: I sent Masha to him. There are guests in the house.

SERGEY: That was the best thing to do. Well, does your mustache grow yet, Issay? Rub it with kerosene. Mustaches love kerosene. (*To OTSHELNIKOV.*) You know, when I read the notice, I lost myself.

OTSHELNIKOV: But you knew that he was at sea?

SERGEY: Only from the notice. How did it all happen? Miscalculation?

OTSHELNIKOV: I don't think so. Vasili never miscalculated. Perhaps the current drove them off their course and broke through their bottom. That of course would be the cleanest end.

SERGEY: I understand. What the hell good is all your wonderful hydrography?

OTSHELNIKOV: Well, one bottom will never cover the whole ocean. And what an ocean.

ISSAYKA: Get ready. Father is coming.

(MASHA comes in.)

MASHA: I didn't have the time to tell him anything. And I didn't have enough courage. You, Seryozha. . . . Later, later. (MACCAVEYEV enters with ANATOLY. MACCAVEYEV is peaceful, the newspaper is no longer sticking out of his pocket. SERGEY embraces him.)

SERGEY: Good health, Maccaveyev. (*Holding him in his arms.*) You are kind and warm. Well, how is your politico-moral condition?

MACCAVEYEV: Thanks. Everything is just as it should be. Will you be here long?

SERGEY: My column is passing here. So I decided to jump in for . . . (*He looks at his wrist watch.*) exactly six minutes. That's an eternity of time, father.

MACCAVEYEV: Your eternity is somewhat miserly, Seryozhenka.

SERGEY: After the tactical maneuvers I will come for a whole week. Bake the cakes in advance. And meanwhile, don't be angry. Now all of us army men are miserly with our time. I see the children are here. Anatoly . . . Masha, you aren't angry that seven years ago I broke the nose of your doll? It is a pity, father, that Vasili didn't come this time.

MACCAVEYEV: Just exactly what do you mean by that, Seryozhenka?

(SERGEY is saved in his embarrassment by the arrival of a LIEUTENANT.)

LIEUTENANT: Comrade Combrig.

SERGEY (*turning*): Yes.

LIEUTENANT: Lieutenant Ivanov. With a packet from the Commander of the Cavdivision.

SERGEY: Yes. (*He reads.*) It always happens that way. The increase of causes brings on an increase in consequences. Excuse me, father. You see how quickly our life runs. (*He goes aside with the LIEUTENANT, who takes a map out of his field bag and hands it to SERGEY. SERGEY makes several marks on it. His pencil breaks. The LIEUTENANT takes his own from the pocket of his tunic and gives it to SERGEY.*)

Thanks. Ask the Staff Commander to establish contact with the division.

LIEUTENANT: An order to tell the Staff Commander to establish contact with the division.

SERGEY: You may go.

LIEUTENANT: I go. (*He goes out.*)

SERGEY: And now I am again with you, father. Is mother all right? I found her a pair of slippers in the Caucasus that she will remember all her life. I will bring them when the maneuvers are over.

MACCAVEYEV: You spent a minute and a half on this packet. Is that part of the six minutes, Seryozha?

SERGEY: Yes, Maccaveyev. We are going into battle. It is fine here now, but we are raising thunder and scaring your birds. But what's to do, Maccaveyev? Half the world wants to shower bombs on us. And what a half-world! The blood of Abyssinia is still wet on their hands. Maybe I would be building famous canals now, and Alyoshka here would be writing sonatas, and Vasili . . . (*There is a silence.*) Masha, have you already made the acquaintance of this young fellow? Give him the full eye, girl. For how long is your furlough, eagle?

OTSHELNIKOV: A month, including traveling. There is still plenty of time left.

SERGEY: Then everything is in order. Well, it is time for me to go. I've got to get to my machines. I should be glad to hear your voice, father. Give me a word in farewell, your last. (*He takes off his cap.*)

MACCAVEYEV: I want a great deal, but you are in a hurry. I want no one to blame a Maccaveyev for cowardice or weakness or lying.

SERGEY: You have the word of a Maccaveyev. (*He makes a parting gesture.*) Masha, embrace our brothers. Are they well? You, Anatoly, give this fellow a few lessons. He also likes boxing. Take care of my father, Otshehlukov. . . . (*He stops midway in going out.*) Fly, eagles! (*He goes out.*)

ISSAYKA: And me, Seryozha . . . Later. It will be all right later. Go on now, go on . . .

MACCAVEYEV (*sitting down on the bench*): The guests have made me tired. And one hasn't come yet. It is like war. (*To ANATOLY, who*

has put a hand on his shoulder.) What will you do, Tolenka, if there should be war?

ANATOLY: A right cross to the heart, Fatherkin. I will be the first to lay my life down.

MACCAVEYEV: A right cross . . . that's strange Russian, sonny. And who will defend my orchards?

ISSAYKA: Another error, Tolya.

MACCAVEYEV: And let them break their heads against your chests. And let our Little Apple thunder under the gates of their capital city. Do they sing Little Apple nowadays? . . . And I forget now what they call their capital. (*To OTSHELNIKOV.*) Well, young fellow. Is your memory short too?

OTSHELNIKOV: I am listening to you attentively, Adrian Timofeyevich.

MACCAVEYEV (*smiling to himself*): You've put your uniform on? Well, the ball is over. Our everyday's begin. It is time to sleep. (*He goes out, and at the same instant a procession of tanks begins its thunderous march in the distance.*)

MASHA: Go after him and tell him, Alyosha. When I ran in he was telling something to mother about Vasili. They embraced. I didn't dare disturb them.

ANATOLY: What happened?

OTSHELNIKOV (*taking him by the arm*): Tomorrow he will learn everything himself. Let us save this night for your father.

. (*SERGEY'S column of tanks is drawing nearer. The noise increases. The young people stand facing in the direction of the sound. ISSAYKA waves his hand. The moon has hidden itself. The light in one of the windows of the house goes out. Darkness, and the rolling of thunder. The first dryish splash of rain. In a flash of lightning one can see MASHA raising her hands palms upward to meet the rain.*)

CURTAIN

ACT FOUR

The same place as in ACT ONE. Dinner is finished, but the dishes have not yet been removed from the table. It is toward twilight, and the orchard outside is wet with rain. ISSAYKA's cot is no longer in the room. Near the wall, in a row, stand the valises of the brothers. Sitting on a stool, ANATOLY puts his things into one of the valises. YURI is examining the half naked ISSAYKA. A spirit stove burns on the little table near them.

YURI: You remember with certainty that you did not fall and hurt yourself?

ISSAYKA: No. It has become very cold here.

YURI: That is nothing. You can bear it. (*To ANATOLY.*) Well, why have you become silent? You said you ran out into the ring. And then? (*There is a silence.*) What's the matter with you? Have you broken up, or what?

ANATOLY: For some reason my gloves won't get in here.

YURI (*rising, amazed at his tone, and speaking to ISSAYKA*): Wait before you put on your shirt. (*He walks over to ANATOLY, and lifts his chin with his hand. The latter weakly resists.*)

ANATOLY: It's a pity about father, and about Vaska. I should rather have let them cut my arm off at the shoulder, at the heart, here.

YURI: Take hold of yourself, Tolya. A champion, and you behave like a little boy. Even your lips are trembling.

ANATOLY: Let me go. What are you twisting me for? I am no bicycle handle.

ISSAYKA (*gently*): Yura, I'm becoming ice all over. (*YURI returns to him. Enter VICTOR from outside. Still wearing his wet coat, with sweaty eyeglasses, he stands silently in the middle of the room.*) It hurts.

YURI: Does it?

ISSAYKA: Your hands are cold. You go right on and prick me wherever it is necessary.

YURI: Everything is all right if it hurts. (*To VICTOR.*) Did you find father?

VICTOR: I went as far as old Mossey's place, but I didn't see him anywhere. (*To ANATOLY, who is tearing papers.*) You are still packing? (*There is a silence.*) And Pylyayev is gone too. Where could he have hidden himself?

YURI: He won't get very far. (*To ISSAYKA.*) Now bend your knee. Come, make an effort.

VICTOR: If anyone had ever pulled my nose, I would have run away naked in the snow. And that man walks about as if nothing had happened. What does Alexey say?

YURI: All is turning out right, Vitya.

ANATOLY (*leaping up*): Where are we living, where? That scoundrel has insulted our father, and we remain silent. He is waiting for somebody, and you tell us to keep still. And we are still. Vitka, we are still. My nails itch whenever I see him. You are the oldest, but you are very slow and you won't let us take him by the neck. . . .

VICTOR: Quiet. (*Enter PYLYAYEV with a bundle of firewood. He goes to the stove.*)

YURI: Close the door, if the effort will not tire you.

PYLYAYEV (*returning to the door*): Pardon me.

VICTOR: People should say hello when they enter a strange house.

(*ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA brings in a plate with pirogs.*)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: This is for your journey. Let them cool off. Well, Yura, can anything be done to repair this man? He is a good fellow.

YURI: Dress yourself now. He will make a hero one of these days. He is going with us to Moscow.

ISSAYKA: Then I must pack. Brothers, will you wait for me? Mama, isn't the weather getting clearer?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Everything is mud, and the roads have turned to rivers. How will you travel in such weather? You ought to wait; it might clear up.

ANATOLY: We can't wait, Ma. Yuri has to go back to his clinic, and I must prepare for my next match. (*Pointing to his boxing gloves.*) The devil take it, I have just remembered that they were packed in a separate package. Wait, this stool is a little too high for me to sit on.

(*He goes to PYLYAYEV, who is making a fire in the stove, sitting on a low bench.*) Be a good fellow, and get off for a minute. (*He takes the bench and carries it to his valise.*)

PYLYAYEV: Won't you defend me, Aleksandra Ivanovna? (*There is a silence. The fire springs up in the stove. VICTOR opens the door. Enter MACCAVEYEV with a basket of apples. They are wet, and so is his rain-coat. Everybody rises.*)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: We didn't know what to think about you. Dinner is over already.

MACCAVEYEV (*speaking of the basket*): Let the water run off it. Why did you all leap up when I came in? I am no archbishop.

ANATOLY: We are preparing to sail, Fatherkin. (*MACCAVEYEV looks around the room, and following his gaze, YURI puts out the spirit stove. ANATOLY picks up the torn paper from the floor.*) I left that behind me, father.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Are you looking for Masha? She got wet, and she is drying herself upstairs. She has been looking for Soniushka, who has disappeared since morning. And Unuss isn't to be found anywhere either.

ISSAYKA: Victor, we will not be late?

VICTOR: We still have two hours and forty minutes to spare. But one has to add some time on account of the bad roads.

MACCAVEYEV: Well, the house will be clean again. (*To his wife.*) Here, hang up my coat to dry.

PYLYAYEV: Put it near the fire, Adrian. Here, give it to me. (*He becomes wordless under MACCAVEYEV's steady stare.*) I will take a walk. You must say good-bye to your sons.

MACCAVEYEV: Yes, take a walk. Go, take a walk. (*PYLYAYEV goes out.*) It has become dark early today. (*He snaps on the light.*) Well, untie your bags. Sasha, give me a towel. They are wet. (*And standing on his knees he begins to put the apples into his sons' valises.*) Move the basket over here, Tolya. Show your strength.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Leave some place for the pirogs. Don't take up all the space there is. Where are you putting those apples? Right on those clean shirts.

MACCAVEYEV: Enough for this one. Tie it. Where is the next? You should have prepared a sack so that they might take enough with them.

YURI (*sotto voce*): Victor, help father.

VICTOR: Why are you bending before us, father? Here, let me do it. (MACCAVEYEV *cedes his place to VICTOR, and they work in silence. VICTOR manages to pull the negative ribbon out of the camera. To ANATOLY.*) Take the picture of your accomplishments, and don't hold your nose too high before the world, champion. (ANATOLY *goes to the side, looking at the negative.*)

MACCAVEYEV: Put some under the books. You pay even for unoccupied space on the railroad.

VICTOR: The strap will break, Fatherkin. We might take some out. What will we do with all of them?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: You will eat them on top of your tower and think of your old man an extra minute.

MACCAVEYEV: Tie it up. Tie it up. You will sell the leftovers in the market. Well, the horses have been ordered.

VICTOR: Father, we wanted to tell you something . . .

MACCAVEYEV: Come, pierce my heart again.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: He knows it all, boys. (MACCAVEYEV *goes to the door and looks through the glass.*)

MACCAVEYEV: Things go on in the world. The rain is falling. The wagon wheels will sink to their axles. (*He turns.*) Well, let me embrace you for the last time, Maccaveyevs.

ISSAYKA: Hurry, Anatoly, or we will be late.

ANATOLY (*to VICTOR*): I have been good to you for nothing. There is nothing on this negative except little holes.

VICTOR: Be quiet now.

MACCAVEYEV: So there will come another year. Perhaps they will begin climbing here again. . . . And as for me, sinner that I am, there are times when I want to nod a little. Nothing, the motherland will excuse me. I have been flying high; it is time to make friends with the earth again.

YURI: Next year we will come here earlier, in the spring.

MACCAVEYEV: They say that in that other world there is no trouble and no grief. But I always loved my troubles. . . . I adored conquering and breaking them. (*He looks at his hands.*) Look at them. They are dark, my hands. And all in veins.

VICTOR: Well, you buried them in the earth and an orchard grew there. It was good.

MACCAVEYEV: Things with me aren't bad at all. I have enough to eat. (*To YURI.*) Well, go now to cure your hypochondriacs. (*To VICTOR.*) And you, go to build. People are worth having men give all their strength in working for them. (*To ANATOLY.*) There he is laughing again. Remember, if you should be beaten, I won't let you cross my threshold.

ISSAYKA: Papa, I am going too, to be mended.

MACCAVEYEV (*kissing only him*): And you, my smallest, weakest one. Mother, his hair is soft, like mine.

YURI: It is time, Issay. Get your belongings together.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: His whole baggage is a bit of linen and Vasili's drill. Vitya, help him to get over to his place. (*VICTOR takes ISSAYKA to his corner under the stairway. Then he and YURI and ANATOLY go upstairs.*)

ISSAYKA (*across the whole room*): Papa.

MACCAVEYEV: What do you want, race horse?

ISSAYKA: How will you get on here all alone?

MACCAVEYEV (*in a deep bass*): I will play on a guitar.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Masha is staying here. Alyosha Otshelnikov will stay for some time too. Dress yourself, and go. (*ISSAYKA closes the door of his little room.*)

MACCAVEYEV: Don't set any dishes for me. I won't eat. Throw me Issayka's sheepskin. (*He wraps his legs in the sheepskin.*) Well, what about Matvey? Have you seen enough of him? You thought that he would bring you back your youth in his pocket? You aren't ashamed?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: One is not ashamed of grief. One hides it.

MACCAVEYEV: Call him in to me.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA (*opening the door to the orchard*): Matvey,

come in. He is calling you. . . . Should I go, or should I remain here?

MACCAVEYEV: Put some vodka on the table for him, and go out. (ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA sets PYLYAYEV's last supper.) That is all. Close the door tightly. (She goes out. PYLYAYEV comes in from the orchard. He rubs his hands.)

PYLYAYEV: The wind has risen. My eyes are watering. (MACCAVEYEV is silent.) I was crying just now, Adrian. The time has come for Pylyayev, too.

MACCAVEYEV: That is bad. Your eyesight might fade because of it. And why were you crying?

PYLYAYEV: I looked over all my accounts.

MACCAVEYEV: That is good. Pour a drink for yourself. It will warm you. Why are you looking at the door all the time?

PYLYAYEV: The rainstorm. It's a bad thing for anyone caught outside. (He pours himself a drink.) See, my hand is dancing as if it were shot. Don't be angry at me, Adrian. You are like a mountain, and what can insult a mountain? You have all this. (He makes a broad gesture.) As for me, I have only one stick, and that came from a stranger's fence. Pylyayev has rattled by and left no track behind him, like a dead man in water. What was it they were reading here yesterday? "And darkness came. The dragonfly alone was dancing like a flame . . ." It is bitter for me to say it, but I was even jealous of your grief last night. You don't mind my talking so much?

MACCAVEYEV: Speak, speak. When you finish, I will chase you out.

PYLYAYEV: And so, I have known everything. Love, glory, escape. I am only fifty, but my hands are almost paralyzed in the mornings. It is time to steal some boards to make myself a coffin. But there was a time, there was a time, Adrian. When Skoropadsky was raging in the Ukraine, it was I and not another that they sent among the Germans for secret work . . .

MACCAVEYEV: And for a whole week you did that secret work in my house.

PYLYAYEV: Well, that means that you know everything. Then let us drink to the soldiers' wives, Maccaveyev. (ISSAYKA, already dressed, comes out of his little room,)

ISSAYKA: Don't drink with him, Papa. And it is high time you went, Pylyayev. It is already evening.

PYLYAYEV (*suspicious, and unwilling to go*): Yes, I am going right away. It seems that the rain has stopped too. Well, thanks for your bread and salt, Adrian. You wouldn't have an old pair of rubbers lying around somewhere? (*He puts on his coat, and takes his stick from the corner.*)

ISSAYKA: You can go without rubbers now. You had better hurry. A man is waiting for you near the gate.

PYLYAYEV: Nonsense. I am alone, alone in all the world. . . . Who?

ISSAYKA: The one you were waiting to see for the last two days. He has come. (*PYLYAYEV looks with fear at the blackness of the open doorway.*)

PYLYAYEV: Perhaps I should go out of the back door. (*ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA comes from the inner doorway.*)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: That way will be nearer, Matvey.

PYLYAYEV: There are too many puddles out there. . . .

(*OTSHELNIKOV appears from the terrace.*)

OTSHELNIKOV: You needn't be afraid of catching cold now, Pylyayev. (*PYLYAYEV suddenly strikes the lamp with his stick. The light goes out. There is the fall of a body and the sound of breaking glass. The weak glimmering of the fire in the stove is crossed by the flash of passing feet. These are the men who have come with OTSHELNIKOV. In the darkness there is a short struggle. Then everything grows quiet. Someone tries to strike a match.*)

OTSHELNIKOV: My matches are all damp. Aleksandra Ivanovna, have you any matches?

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: I will put on the light in the next room. (*A square beam of light comes from the inner door. Everything in the room has been changed, except the position of MACCAVEYEV. The tablecloth is on the floor; the chairs are lying about the room in disorder. PYLYAYEV is no longer in the room. ISSAYKA is sitting on the floor.*)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Did he hurt you, Issay?

ISSAYKA: No. When I threw my crutches under his feet, I lost my

balance. Mama, everything is in order. We only dreamed it, mama. Help me to get up.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Can you get to the chair by yourself? (OTSHELNIKOV *has lit a candle, and is picking up things from the floor.*) I will come back soon. (*She leads ISSAYKA to his room.*) I will clean this up later. Thanks, Alyosha, for everything.

OTSHELNIKOV: I only did what Vasili would have done if he had been in my place.

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA (*going out*): The children are upstairs. Go up to see them.

OTSHELNIKOV: Later. (*He looks out of the open door into the orchard.*) Well, they have taken him away. (*He turns to MACCAVEYEV.*) And now, hello, Adrian Timofeyevich. The weather is fine for the orchard.

MACCAVEYEV: You make a clean job of life, Alexey. I didn't understand in the beginning.

OTSHELNIKOV (*closing the door*): Now do you know why he came here?

MACCAVEYEV (*in a whisper*): He has a son here—Issay. All of us look for some support in our old age.

OTSHELNIKOV: You haven't guessed, Adrian Timofeyevich.

MACCAVEYEV: You think he came here looking for Sasha?

OTSHELNIKOV: It was much more simple than that. In life it is always simple. This man was once frightened of death, and he sold himself for life. Do you understand? Everybody loves you here, everybody has faith in you. So he came here to wait for his master from the outside. And he waited just long enough.

MACCAVEYEV: We are simple people, we live with open hearts. What about his son, and Sasha, and the hatred in him, Alyosha? Can feeling find a place for itself in this miasma of dishonor and filth?

OTSHELNIKOV: With them everything is a play and a masquerade, but in the depths there is hate and connivance. But enough about them. They are many, we are more. My matches have become damp. (*He goes to the stove to light his cigarette. With an ember in his hand,*

he speaks.) They are many, we are more. Vaska said that just before he went away. He was shaving himself when I brought him some books. Then he rose, and for some reason at that time he seemed to me to have assumed tremendous proportions.

MACCAVEYEV: He has broad bones, my son. His chest, do you remember?

OTSHELNIKOV: I remember him and myself wrestling in the sand in Sochy. He always had me down in the second minute.

MACCAVEYEV: How did he, Alyosha . . . hand-to-hand with the ocean? It is not enough to be Vaska to fight the ocean hand-to-hand. And so he didn't attain his goal?

OTSHELNIKOV: We will take care of that. Vasili is not the only one in our fleet.

MASHA (*from the stairway*): I heard your voice, Alexey. Why is it so dark here?

OTSHELNIKOV: The lamp fell and broke.

MASHA: I will put a new one in later. Come, the council of the sons is in full meeting before their departure. They want to see you.

MACCAVEYEV: You will finish telling me tomorrow. Give me a little bit about him every day. Go with her, go. (*OTSHELNIKOV goes upstairs with MASHA. A gust of wind opens wide the door. MACCAVEYEV does not move. Leaves from the terrace glide along the floor. Papers rustle. The candle flame leaps.*) Well, come in. Nearer, nearer. Give me your little minute. How new you are and how good. Your face is scratched, and your hand is wet. . . . Eh, you are always in a hurry, wind. (*The gust of wind weakens. The Maccaveyev sons come down the stairs in procession, dressed for their journey. MASHA and OTSHELNIKOV follow them.*)

YURI: You are sleeping, father?

VICTOR: Come, come; let's go back. He was busy in the orchard and he got chilled.

ISSAYKA: He sleeps. Adrian always sleeps sitting.

YURI: I will go to close the door.

MASHA: Here, you can put this bulb into the lamp. (*YURI comes down and screws in the bulb. Then he looks into his father's face.*)

YURI: Scientific medicine, father, advises us to close our eyes during sleep. Come on down, boys.

ANATOLY (to ISSAYKA): Get on my back, tink.

VICTOR: Who will speak?

YURI: I. Stand up, you who are about to leave.

MASHA (to OTSHELNIKOV): Stand up with them too, seventh son.

OTSHELNIKOV: They want only those who are to leave, and I am staying on, Sparrow.

YURI: This is fresh news, father. At the evening sitting of the council of your sons it has been decided to express to you a vote of gratitude for your hospitality. Touché. (*They imitate several chords of music.*)

VICTOR: No, Brotherkin, you have none of the necessary informational talent. Let me do it. (*Imitating the hissing voice of a radio announcer.*) And besides, comma, unless there is an objection, comma, to ask you for permission to remain here for three days more. That is all. Period. Period.

MACCAVEYEV: My boys.

YURI: Now let us carefully carry him to bed. He hasn't gotten over his sickness yet.

ISSAYKA: The sick must lie down. Only those who are healthy must walk.

ANATOLY: Fatherkin, don't fight back. Give me your leg.

MACCAVEYEV (*easily defending himself from the hands stretched to help him*): Have you doctors found yourself a new rabbit to experiment on? Is it right to try all the powders in the world on one solitary man? Have a heart. (*To ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA, who came in a little before.*) Sasha, why don't you give me something to eat. Here I have been sitting an hour, two hours, and hinting . . .

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Come, I have something saved for you inside. What a present you have given him, boys.

MACCAVEYEV: And wait with your celebration. I haven't signed your resolution yet. Right now the council of parents will meet to consider your proposal. (*He and ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA go into an inner room. STREKOPYTOV pushes in through the door from the terrace, which he closes behind him.*)

STREKOPYTOV: The second bell for those leaving on the train. Fortune is smiling on the young. The weather is clearing; one can even see a star or two.

MASHA: Where did you lose Dussyā? (*Dussyā pushes past the door against which STREKOPYTOV has been standing.*)

Dussyā: I am here, right here.

STREKOPYTOV: Dussenka, these people are in a hurry. Dussenka, one must maintain the niceties. The horses have arrived. Well, go to fight for our glory.

Dussyā (*giving her husband a package*): Don't drop this . . . Victor, I have forgiven you everything. I was so afraid that I would miss you. . . . Have you heard the news? The world is full of great events. Soniushka has married Irod. . . . Victor, you haven't thought it over?

VICTOR: I always keep my word.

STREKOPYTOV: Don't tempt him, don't tempt him. It's of no use now anyway.

Dussyā: Then you will write me letters, and each time you write I shall expect at least four pages in very small handwriting. Better address them to Aleksandra Ivanovna, or this fox will get them before I do. (*To her husband.*) Platon, give me this package. This is jam. Eat it when you are on the train. It is made of Chinese apples, little ones, like this. (*She puts her thumb and forefinger together, and touches the lips of VICTOR, who is squeezing himself into a corner.*) You can't get away. There is a spoon wrapped in a note, inside. You will read the note before you go to sleep.

STREKOPYTOV: It is such a pity, such a pity that we are remaining here alone again. Imagine just for a minute the very essence of the thing: a dreaming forest, and then suddenly a ray of the sun.

ANATOLY: I can gladden your heart, my singing ancient. The aforementioned ray of the sun will remain with you for three days more. (*Dussyā claps her hands. STREKOPYTOV drops the package with jam.*)

Dussyā: Clay hands, you have dropped my heart. Don't worry, Victor, I will cook you some more.

STREKOPYTOV: And there was I, putting fresh hay in the wagon for their sake.

YURI: Attention. The newlyweds are coming. (*Enter UNUSS and RUCHKINA, under one umbrella, dressed in their best, wet with the rain, and very solemn. With them a bouquet of wet flowers. There is general applause.*)

RUCHKINA: Comrades, it isn't necessary, it isn't necessary . . . I will run away.

MASHA: We already guessed it this morning. They went away. And where did they go away? And she didn't go all by herself. Bravo, Soniushka.

RUCHKINA: Stop it, Sparrow. My, what the two of us look like . . . (*UNUSS respectfully gathers the things that fall from her hands, the flowers, her gloves, her coat.*)

DUSSYA (*hanging on her neck*): I forgive you, I forgive you everything. But why did you keep it a secret? Why didn't you show me your new dress? Why everything? . . . Soniushka, I know you will have children. But, for your own sake, don't overdo it. Keep your lines.

RUCHKINA: Such things are not mentioned aloud . . . Dussya, one must have a little tact.

DUSSYA: Do you mean to imply that I have no tact?

RUCHKINA: Irod, why don't you say something to them?

UNUSS: We . . . We will try to justify the confidence of our friends.

RUCHKINA (*to MACCAVEYEV, who came in shortly before*): Help him out, Adrian Timofeyevich. We are burning up with shame.

MACCAVEYEV: Here you are, occupied with foolishness, and . . . (*to STREKOPYTOV*) did you send the apples to the soldiers, as you were supposed to?

STREKOPYTOV: I am sending them tomorrow morning.

MACCAVEYEV: There it is again, there it is again, the same old merry-go-round. . . . There he is again, my Platon . . . and so proud about it . . .

THE VOICES OF ALL: Aleksandra Ivanovna. Aleksandra Ivanovna.

Mama. Quicker. We need an immediate translation. . . . (ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA *comes in to quiet* MACCAVEYEV.)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Stop it now, Adrian. On such a day. . . . Sit down, all of you, we are going to have tea. Vitya, bring in the samovar.

(VICTOR *goes into the kitchen. The rest sit down around the table.*)

YURI: It would be interesting to know who is going to marry next.

MASHA: Drop your little jokes, Yuri. They bore me.

ANATOLY: As I am staying here now, I shall have to prepare for my match here. And there is no one for me to work out with . . . Perhaps you would do it for me, Alexey? . . .

OTSHELNIKOV: I am entirely at your service, Anatoly. (VICTOR *carries in the samovar.*)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA (*to* RUCHKINA): How did you ever think of doing it now? You dragged it out so many years, and then suddenly, one morning . . .

RUCHKINA: I know it is terrible . . . but he kidnapped me.

DUSSYA: Lord, others always have the luck! Come, tell us all about it now.

RUCHKINA: Irod, tell them how it was that you thought about it.

THE VOICES OF ALL: Attention . . . Silence . . . Tell us your secrets. . . .

UNUSS: If one is to begin at the very beginning, I must confess that the thought about it has been present in me for a very long time. But the year before last, I was listening to the Senior Agriculturist at the District Conference . . .

MACCAVEYEV: You mean Afanassy, no? He is a bag of wind.

UNUSS: Yes, it is very funny. You remember how he described the differentiation in the hybridization of fruit trees? I even told him at that time: "I beg your kind pardon . . . Don't think that I want to insult you, but to a certain degree I have the courage to think that you are too, too original." And I reminded him, ha-ha, how many years ago, when the great Schroeder was crossing his large-fruited China Apple, *Pyrus prunifolia*, with the ordinary orchard varieties . . .

STREKOPYTOV: You didn't come in through the right door, Irod Antonovich. (*Everybody laughs.*)

UNUSS: What do you mean by that?

DUSSYA (*to her husband*): Now you are breaking in on him, but at all other times you are silent, that is the essence of it. Well, why don't you say something too, say something important?

RUCHKINA (*to UNUSS*): Sit down, my silver-tongued local Demosthenes.

(ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA *gestures to everyone to stop, for the village postman has come in from the terrace. He is an old man, dressed in a poor oilskin coat. He digs for a long time in his pouch.*)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Whom are you looking for?

POSTMAN: I have a wireless telegram here. It's right here, stuck in the lining. There I was, walking, walking, and the darkness all around, like the heart of winter.

OTSHELNIKOV (*leaving the table*): Excuse me, friends. I think it is for me.

POSTMAN: Well, well, my wireless is a little wet. I can't see anything by so much light, just like an old owl. Wait, here it is. Otshelnikov, Alexey.

OTSHELNIKOV: Give it to me. (*He signs for the telegram.*) Why are you laughing, comrade?

POSTMAN: And why not? Wherever I come I find an Alexey. And my own name is Alexey too.

OTSHELNIKOV (*offering him his cigarette case*): Well then, smoke up if you're an Alexey.

POSTMAN: No, I'll smoke my own. I bet your tobacco doesn't bite. You better read it first, perhaps I brought you bad news. Lord, what I carry in this pouch sometimes.

OTSHELNIKOV (*reading the telegram and straightening up*): No, this time it is good news. Masha, have you a railroad time-table here? (*All rise from the table. MASHA digs under the counter, hurriedly throwing out some papers.*)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: But you have a furlough, Alyoshenka.

OTSHELNIKOV: Well, you see the kind of man I am; they can't do

anything without me. Masha, a little more quickly. (*To the POSTMAN.*) Did you notice if the horses were still here?

STREKOPYTOV: I forgot all about the horses. What do you think of that?

POSTMAN (*rolling his cigarette and spitting on it*): They are neighing out there. One can't see who it is that is neighing. Citizens wouldn't start neighing of a sudden.

(*At last MASHA gives OTSHELNIKOV the time-table.*)

OTSHELNIKOV: Where is your branch railroad? So, twenty-two-forty. (*He looks at his watch.*) There isn't very much time. And if I don't make it? One-thirty-two. No, it would be best to hurry. (*He begins to put on wraps.*)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Finish your tea, Alyoshenka.

OTSHELNIKOV: Don't take it away from the table. I will finish it when I come next time. I will come rowing here next year . . .

RUCHKINA: Put some pirogs in your pocket. They are good to chew on the way. (*She also stretches the plate out to the POSTMAN.*) Have some, Grandfather.

POSTMAN (*taking four of them with the tips of his fingers*): For my little ones. . . . Last month, in the very same hour a son and a grandson were born to me. That's the kind of grandfather I am.

OTSHELNIKOV: Well, many thanks to my hosts for their kindness. I will try to earn it.

MACCAVEYEV: So, it's in Vaska's footsteps for you, Alyosha? (*He takes OTSHELNIKOV's head in his hands, and looks into his eyes.*)

YURI (*to MASHA*): Masha, don't bite your nails.

MACCAVEYEV (*letting OTSHELNIKOV go*): There's gladness in your eyes.

OTSHELNIKOV: My general best wishes to all—to the engineers, the pomologists, the physicians. . . . (*To ANATOLY.*) Don't forget about the defense of the solar plexus. . . . Masha.

MASHA (*controlled*): I will take you as far as the wagon.

ISSAYKA: We will meet again, Alexey. (*OTSHELNIKOV goes out. MASHA runs after him, with a plate from which apples fall to the floor as she runs.*)

ALEKSANDRA IVANOVNA: Sparrow, put something over your shoulders. You will catch a cold, Masha.

RUCHKINA: Don't bother her in this minute. (*She closes the door behind MASHA, and seems to stand guard before it.*)

STREKOPYTOV: And that is all. As if nothing had ever taken place. And that is the essence of the thing . . .

DUSSYA (*very quietly*): How she will love him when he returns. What sunlight will shine for her on that night . . .

UNUSS (*near the window*): It looks as if the moon is rising. (*Unheard, MASHA re-enters. Her slippers are muddy; her hair is wet; her blouse clings to her shoulders. Spreading her arms and holding to the door frame with her hands, she stands with closed eyes.*)

MASHA: What a mist there is outside. . . . Why are you all so still? I want everything and everyone to be joyful tonight. It is my day, my day. Boys . . . where is your music, boys? . . .

CURTAIN

ON THE EVE

A Play in Three Acts and Five Scenes

BY ALEXANDER AFINOGENOV

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN

By Eugenia Afinogenova



AFINOGENOV

Alexander Nikolaevich Afinogenov was born in 1904 and brought up in Yaroslavl on the upper Volga where his father was a writer and his mother was a schoolteacher. He himself started writing at fifteen, edited a paper at sixteen, published three small books of verse while still in his teens, and began having his plays produced at the Proletcult Theatre in Moscow when he was only nineteen.

Afinogenov's first three plays dealt with labor struggles of earlier times in other countries: Robert Tim (1923), with the revolt of the weavers in England in the early nineteenth century; South of the Slot (1926), with a strike in San Francisco in the early twentieth century; and At the Breaking Point (1926), with unrest in Germany after the First World War.

His next three plays turned to the life he found about him in the Soviet Union: Keep Both Eyes Open (1927) dealt with the need of the young Communists to be alert; Raspberry Jam (1927), with the danger of a Red Army officer's neglecting his duties; and The Trail of the Wolf (1928), with the running down of enemies within Russia.

The more mature plays that followed discussed internal problems that were troubling the people: The Eccentric (1929), the role of a non-Communist in the Soviet Union; Fear (1931), the part played by fear among the Russian intellectuals; The Portrait (1934), the esthetic and emotional life in a workers' republic; Distant Point (1935), the need of morale even in a remote Soviet village; Spain, We Salute You (1936), the Spanish Loyalists' struggle against the forces of Fascism; The Mother of Her Children (1940), the devotion of Mother Russia to all her children; and Mashenka (1941), a young girl winning over her grandfather to a sympathy for the new Russia.

After the Nazi attack on Russia in June, 1941, Afinogenov wrote the play given here, On the Eve, depicting the life of a Russian family on the eve of the invasion and the transformation that took place in the following weeks. On November 5, 1941, Afinogenov was killed by a bomb in a Nazi air raid while on duty in the heart of Moscow.

H. W. L. D.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

TIMOFEI ILITCH ZAVALOV, a smelter, now on pension, aged 65
IVAN TIMOFEOVITCH ZAVALOV, his son, a Major-General in the Red Army, aged 42
ANDREI TIMOFEOVITCH ZAVALOV, his second son, an agronomist, aged 35
JEREN, from Turkmenistan, Andrei's wife, aged 25
SOFIA PAVLOVNA GARAeva, an actress, aged 39
KOLYA, her son, a student, aged 19
ZACHAR ZACHAROVITCH MAMONTOV, a surgeon, aged 52
VERA, his daughter, a medical student, aged 20
VASILI BUTAGA, a young smelter, aged 23
ANNA GRIGOREVNA, his mother, aged 55
KATERINA FILIPOVNA, a young woman, aged 23
OLESHUK
GETASHVILI
COMMANDERS } Red Army men
Soldiers in antiaircraft battery, Commanders, Signal Corps men

Time of Action: June 21, June 23, and July, 1941

Place of Action: Garden of a Country House near Moscow

ON THE EVE

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

Bright June evening. A garden on the shore of a river. The river like a silver band lies far beneath. On the horizon beyond the river are seen the lights of the city. From the open windows of ZAVALOV's country home beams of light illuminate the terrace and the trees in the garden. Someone is playing a waltz on the piano.

ANDREI ZAVALOV comes out onto terrace, goes up to window and softly calls:

ANDREI: Jeren . . . Jeren . . . (JEREN appears at the window, sees ANDREI, and leaves the house.)

JEREN: Andrusha? What has happened, Andrusha?

ANDREI: I don't know. Nothing. Suddenly I wanted to be with you for a moment. Sit down with me.

JEREN: But our guests?

ANDREI: The hour has come when the hosts are no longer necessary to the guests. But I need you. Do you remember what day tomorrow will be?

JEREN: Five years we've been together.

ANDREI: Five years. And our baby Tanya already three years old. It seems only yesterday—only yesterday, when I met a sunny Turkmenistan maiden in the cotton fields—and greeted her with a prosaic "Hello."

JEREN: "Hello, I'm an agronomist." I didn't even glance into your face. I only thought what a pleasant voice. What a nice person.

ANDREI: Silly. . . .

JEREN: I spoke Russian so badly, and wept when I looked at myself in the mirror. Slanting eyes. Why do I have slanting eyes, I thought

then. It isn't possible that he could love slanting eyes. And then one evening you called them almond-shaped.

ANDREI: You remember that?

JEREN: I'll never forget it, darling. . . .

(Sounds of the waltz die away. Confused voices are heard through the window, then silence, and a woman's voice is heard singing. JEREN and ANDREI silently listen.)

JEREN *(when song is ended)*: And then you carried me off with you. And our little daughter's eyes also slightly slant, and everyone loves her. We've been husband and wife five years now, and never have we had a quarrel. It's good living together.

ANDREI: Yes, good. So good, that sometimes I'm frightened. You know, when so much has been given to one person, involuntarily, one begins to fear. Perhaps suddenly—all this will end—and nothing remain. I stood watching you dance, and the thought flashed through me—how ephemeral happiness can be. I called you—just to make sure everything's all right.

JEREN *(grasping his hand and speaking softly in Turkoman)*: Beloved mine. If you could only know how much love is in my heart for you.

ANDREI *(in Turkoman)*: Dear heart. How does that song go . . . *(Sings in Turkoman. JEREN softly accompanies him. GARAeva, KOLYA, VERA, VASILI BUTAGA, IVAN, and KATERINA come out onto terrace.)*

KOLYA and KATERINA *(interrupting each other)*: Please, Sofia Pavlovna, recite Mayakovsky—no, Bagritsky.

GARAeva: Tonight's party is in honor of the General's arrival. Ivan Timofeovitch, you choose.

IVAN: If possible, Lermontov's "Mtsyri."

KOLYA: Bravo! "Mtsyri." The "Confessional." Well, mother, begin. Sh-h-h, silence. *(All become quiet.)*

GARAeva:

You come to hear what I confess.

I thank you, kind old man, I guess

I really should before you ease

My mind and aching heart appease.

I never harmed anyone,
And anything I've ever done
Is so drab, you'd hardly care
To hear—and could his soul one bare?
My life was short,
Without excitement, dull and pale.
Like mine, two lives I'd give away
For one of action, strife and play.
In all my life but one desire
I had, that burnt in me like fire,
And whirled my soul as in a storm,
And gnawed my bosom like a worm;
It called me forth from stuffy cells,
From prayers and from ringing bells
Into the wonderland, where life
Is full of battles and of strife;
Where mountains through the clouds high rise
In rocky peaks clear to the skies;
Where brave men are like eagles free—
And free like them I craved to be.

(Pause.)

IVAN: "Like mine, two lives I'd give away for one of action"—and strife. Yes, he understood the meaning of life.

ANDREI: You read beautifully, Sofia Pavlovna. But after all—can it really be that the whole meaning of human life is in strife?

KOLYA: Undoubtedly! (*Declaims.*) "Cannon to the right of them! Cannon to the left of them!" Life—is action, Andrei Timofeovitch! Struggle! Battle!

GARAEVA: There's a play called "The Battle of Life." Once—long ago—I played in it.

ANDREI: But life is also peace, Kolya. Peace, happiness, ripening wheat, the lights of our city there, across the river—the star-swept sky.

IVAN: The sky from which bombs burst forth . . .

ANDREI: Oh, I know, I know. . . . War. But we—we aren't at war—and shall not be.

KOLYA: Yes, we will! Of course we will fight! Isn't that so, Comrade General?

KATYA: Oh, please don't frighten me! As it is, I don't read the newspapers any more, because of that.

ANDREI: Don't worry, Katerina Filipovna; we shall live in peace. And we'll gather a harvest the like of which has not been seen for years! I understand, life for my military brother is as barren without war as mine would be without my wheat. But I'm not thinking about us now—but about the very meaning of life. And that cannot be found in strife.

KOLYA: In what, then?

ANDREI: In creation—in work.

KATYA: That's not my idea of life. It's boring to work all the time. (*Whistle of passing boat is heard.*)

BUTAGA: That's the *Cherneshevsky* passing by.

VERA: Let's run to meet it. Who's coming?

KOLYA: I'll go along.

KATYA: Me too. Kolya, give me your hand. Don't let go of me. I'm afraid of the dark. (*They run off.*)

BUTAGA (*stopping VERA at garden bench under birch tree*): Vera! Do you want me to do something for you—something marvelous? I'll carry you! Just tell me what to do.

VERA: Kiss me in front of everyone.

BUTAGA (*panic-stricken*): Vera!

VERA: 'Fraidy-cat—champion! Let's run.

BUTAGA (*running after her*): Eh . . . What a life! (*BUTAGA, VERA, KOLYA, and KATYA leave.*)

MAMONTOV (*leaning out of the window*): Little hostess, we need help. The wine supply's running low.

JEREN: Please, I'm coming. (*Softly to ANDREI.*) Darling, you spoke well. Of course we find the meaning of life in creation. You're very wise, my Andrei. (*Enters house.*)

GARAEVA (*together with IVAN descends steps*): When I read "Mtsyri" it seems to me, one must live in strife. But in my soul, I like a quiet existence and dislike acting in a play in which there's shooting on the stage.

IVAN: If in life shooting took place only on the stage! What if you were in London now?

GARAEVA: I'd die of fear the very first night.

ANDREI: No use speaking to him of fear. He's a general. By the way, I've never become accustomed to the fact that my brother's a general. "Attention! Right face! March!" Although I'm also a commander in reserve, I must confess I don't like to march in the ranks. (*Laughs.*) Don't worry, Sofia Pavlovna, I'm just plaguing Ivan. I want him to know we're a peaceful people. (*Enters house.*)

GARAEVA: Yes, we're a peaceful people. I, just as Andrei Timofeovitch, hope that war will, somehow, pass us by. My Kolya enters the army this autumn. Please—do arrange things so that there won't be any war. . . .

IVAN (*smiling*): It shall be done . . . hm-m . . . Kolya in the army. Last time I saw him he was still a little boy. Yes. Three years have gone by. And I haven't seen you since "The Three Sisters"—neither on the stage nor in life. Therefore, must be, I still remember you as Olga—and her words . . .

GARAEVA: "The music is playing so gayly, so cheerfully, and how one wants to live! Oh, my God! Time will pass, and we'll leave forever, we'll be forgotten, forgotten shall be our faces, our voices—how many of us there were! But our sufferings will change into happiness for those who shall live after us . . ."

IVAN: For those who shall live after us. . . . But our life is not ended. Who knows what it will be like for you and me? (*Pause.*)

GARAEVA: This is the shortest night in the whole year. Soon it will be dawn.

IVAN: All those years, the thought never left me, that some day I'd find you.

(TIMOFEI *glances out of the window.*)

TIMOFEI: Vanya! My son! Come here! To your health!

IVAN (*whispering*): Let's go. (*They get up and leave, endeavoring to remain unseen. TIMOFEI and MAMONTOV come out, MAMONTOV holding bottle and wine tumblers.*)

TIMOFEI: Son, answer me!

MAMONTOV: Not like that. Hold on, Major-General Zavalov! (*Listens.*) Silence. Place seems empty. Nothing—and again nothing.

TIMOFEI: Nothing! "Nothing from an indefinite something, is definitely nothing."

MAMONTOV: Which means what?

TIMOFEI: Dialectics. I study three pages, each day.

MAMONTOV: And how many of them do you understand?

TIMOFEI: That's why it's called philosophy. So that one shouldn't understand everything immediately. Let's sit down, doctor. Pour me another. (*They sit down on bench under the birch tree.*)

MAMONTOV (*gazing into bottle*): Empty! The third!

TIMOFEI: The third, or the fifth—that's not the question. True infinity doesn't depend on dimensions or magnitudes.

MAMONTOV: Metaphysics.

TIMOFEI: A priori! Do you think I drank for my own satisfaction? That's a myth. I drank for my sons!

MAMONTOV: Let's change the subject, for the sake of clarity.

TIMOFEI: Just think—who am I? I'm the best smelter in the factory. My cannons beat the Germans even in 1914. Precisely. Now, I'm on a pension! The whole factory gave me a send-off. The manager gave me a life pass into the factory. I can come and go as I like. I'm the boss in the factory just as in my own home. A smelter. And, my sons? Andrusha is an agronomist—a scientist. Ivan—a major-general! Their mother was a laundress for a general, and now—she'd be the mother of a general . . . eh . . . the metamorphoses of life. Andrei grows wheat . . . in the whole world there's no such wheat. Look at the place they've built him for the wheat. Eh? You see, Zachar, even if one didn't want to, one would have to drink to such a life. Compelled to drink!

MAMONTOV: Let's change the subject, for the sake of clarity.

TIMOFEI: And do you know what I dream about? Do you know?

(*Embraces* MAMONTOV.) I'd like Ivan to get married. Yes, yes. He's a general—and a bachelor. Impossible!

MAMONTOV: Marry him, marry him.

TIMOFEI: Shall I tell you to whom? To your daughter, Vera! Aha! (*Laughs.*) Then we'll be related to each other, Zachar! Do you approve, Professor?

MAMONTOV: She's too young. Only a student. Studies badly. Couldn't even detach a tendon correctly, and then blames me, that as her father I nag at her—eh?

TIMOFEI: Surgery? Chik—chik—and off goes the leg. As they say in dialectics—there are no isolated phenomena in this world—everything is related . . . so we'll relate Vera and the General, to each other, eh?

MAMONTOV: What do they think about it?

TIMOFEI: A priori! Of course they'll agree! (*Embraces* MAMONTOV.) We'll be kinsmen. (*Enter* BUTAGA and VERA.)

BUTAGA: Oh, Vera, I'd like to invent something extraordinary—so that everyone would be astounded—so that my picture'd be published on the front page. You'd receive the newspaper, open it, and exclaim, "Oh—how Vasya has grown!"

VERA: Oh, yes, grown so, can't reach him with my hand! When you were asked who Cherneshevsky was—you replied that it's a boat.

BUTAGA: But, Vera—remember when that was! Years ago! Nikolai Cherneshevsky was born in 1828—one of the greatest of Russian thinkers—a utopian.

VERA: And what is a utopian?

BUTAGA: A utopian means . . . one who isn't a Marxist. But anyway, he's one of our fellows. I'm so happy, I'd like to break something. What shall I break? (*Breaks huge branch.*)

TIMOFEI: Who's there? Ah, Vasya, my pupil. (*To* MAMONTOV.) He'll be a famous smelter—exactly patterned after me. Oho, and Vera's here! That's good—we've found a bridegroom for you, Vera.

VERA: Where? In the bottom of your bottle?

TIMOFEI: Oh, no, no, don't confuse the issue! Philosophically, I understand perfectly the harmfulness of alcohol, but practically, I haven't laid aside the next to the last wine-glass. Now, don't change

the subject. Your father and I have decided. We've decided to be kinsmen. And you'll be the wife of a general! A priori!

VERA: I? The wife of a general? Thanks, Daddy! (*Embraces father.*) Where's my fiancé? Give me my bridegroom! Ivan Timofevitch—the bride's waiting! (*Runs off towards woods.*)

BUTAGA (*disconcerted*): Timofei Ilitch! What does it all mean?

MAMONTOV: Metaphysics!

TIMOFEI: Did you see how happy she was? That's the girl of today! They all like the man in uniform! (*To BUTAGA*) We can't compare with them, can we, Vasya?

BUTAGA: Of course, absolutely! (*Breaks chair upon which he is leaning.*) A fellow can't find a thing to lean on, around here.

MAMONTOV: Lean against the crag, O Hercules!

TIMOFEI: A priori!

BUTAGA: Well . . . give Vera Zacharovna my compliments, and all the rest. (*Wishes to leave but sees JEREN coming out. Runs to her, nearly pulling her down the steps.*)

JEREN: Vasya, that's my hand—not a branch, nor a tree.

BUTAGA: Sorry. Just a slight mistake. Listen, Jeren, Vera is going to marry the general. I was just made a fool of—just for fun. . . . Tell her something, will you, for me? I trust you. Something that'll make her feel sorry . . .

JEREN: Vasya. (*Scarcely able to hold him back.*) Don't please. It's all a joke. Just a jolly joke. I know. Please, Vasya.

BUTAGA: A joke! Laugh, clown, laugh!

JEREN: I know that Vera likes you. She told me so herself.

BUTAGA (*joyfully*): She herself told you? (*Again seizes her hand.*) Look!

(*VERA arm-in-arm with IVAN enters from the garden, solemnly followed by GARAIEVA, KATYA, and KOLYA. They approach TIMOFEI and MAMONTOV.*)

VERA (*kneeling*): Give us your blessing. Daddy, begin the wedding.

MAMONTOV (*quickly comprehending the situation*): Timosha, a nice mess you've made of things.

TIMOFEI: And why?—We give you our . . .

IVAN (*bursting into laughter*): He's really serious! Ah, ah!

VERA: I told you, I told you—and you wouldn't believe me! Ha-ha! (*All join in laughter.*)

BUTAGA: Ha-ha-ha! (*Seizes JEREN in his arms and whirls around with her.*)

TIMOFEI (*bewildered*): What does it all mean?

MAMONTOV: Let's change the subject, for the sake of clarity!

JEREN: Please, don't. Timofei Ilitch guessed very well—only incorrectly. (*Laughter.*) Tomorrow you'll all know everything. Many, many things.

KOLYA: But why tomorrow?

JEREN: Tomorrow will be a lovely day. And in the evening it will be even merrier here than tonight. Isn't that so, Ivan Timofeovitch?

IVAN: I hope so.

KATYA: Ah, tomorrow! Who knows what will happen tomorrow!

JEREN: Nothing will happen to you tomorrow. (*Laughter.*)

GARAEVA: It's growing light. That means—now—is already tomorrow. (*Softly to IVAN.*) I'm afraid.

IVAN: Why . . . Jeren is right.

VERA: We should greet the dawn with song. Vasya, let's have our favorite—you know.

BUTAGA: I'm hoarse. (*Laughter.*)

KOLYA: It doesn't matter; you're a bass.

BUTAGA (*clearing throat*): Kolya, you lead. I'll harmonize.

KOLYA: All right. (*Starts to sing.*)

(*ANDREI comes out of house.*)

ANDREI: Ivan, you're wanted at once at headquarters.

IVAN (*getting up*): Coming. Continue, please. I'll be back soon. (*Leaves.*)

MAMONTOV: By the way, what's the date today?

KOLYA: The 20th of June, 1941—Saturday.

(*All join in chorus of song.*)

CURTAIN

ACT ONE

SCENE TWO

Same house and garden. Late afternoon. The rays of the setting sun slant through the treetops onto terrace. Droning of airplanes heard.

The roar of tanks passing on the road beyond the walled enclosure sometimes drown words spoken on the terrace where JEREN and ANDREI are finishing packing a valise.

ANDREI is in military uniform. Along the enclosure two Red Army Signal Corps men unwind roll of field cable, securing it to posts and trees. The noise of the tanks quiets down, and the words of a radio, coming through the window of the house, become audible.

VOICE OVER RADIO: . . . During the course of the day, the enemy attempted to force his attack on the whole front, from the Baltic to the Black Sea, directing his main thrust on the Shaulisky, Kaunas, Grodnen-Volkovisk. . . . (*Sounds of passing tanks again muffle radio. When it is again possible to hear, the radio is playing a military march.*)

JEREN: The soap and towel are on top. Your razor's in the corner. I've also put in envelopes and stationery. I know, it'll be difficult to write us often. But, please, don't worry. We'll know, anyway, that you're alive and well. . . . Everything will be all right, darling.

ANDREI: It seemed I had so much to tell you at parting. Important things. Now, I can't remember . . . When I'm in the train, I'll remember . . . You'll be here alone . . . I've already informed them that you'll manage the center—you know all about the plants and seeds, and different varieties . . . but that's not what I wanted to speak about.

JEREN: I understand, dear . . . I'll take care of the wheat. And of your special kind. . . .

ANDREI: At dawn you were still asleep. I went out to the field for the last time. To take leave of the wheat. A hundred acres of the finest sort, caesium. A hundred acres from one grain—the work of man.

JEREN: Your work . . .

ANDREI: Not a soul was around. I sat on the grass and gazed around me. The wheat stood slender, tall, slightly wavering in the breeze, trembling in the consciousness of its own beauty . . . And each tiny stalk of the hundred acres is as familiar to me as Tanya's little fingers. . . . Did she fall asleep?

JEREN: Yes. She had an exciting day running around, looking at the tanks and the airplanes. (*Listens.*) They're still passing. All night long and the whole day without stopping. . . . War.

ANDREI: Yes, war . . . Don't worry about me . . . Take care of yourself, and work, as we used to work together . . . before the twenty-second of June. Most important now, to keep up one's spirits, to be brave. Why do I speak to you of this? It's not at all what I want to say to you . . .

(*GARAEVA enters garden hurriedly.*)

GARAEVA: Hello. Just ran in for a moment, to shake hands. I'm driving to the Mobilization Center to appear before them. The whole town's in action, you know; as if a clean wind had scattered the husks of petty personal affairs. Everything's become bigger—simpler. I've never loved our city as now.

ANDREI: Two days ago I argued with my brother about war. I couldn't imagine I could leave my wheat, put on uniform; that arms would be given me. And now—I can't imagine how it could be otherwise. As if I'd been preparing for this all my life.

JEREN: I suppose we all were preparing. In our souls. We knew this would come. It couldn't pass us by.

GARAEVA: I'd like to say good-bye to Ivan Timofeovitch.

JEREN: He hasn't been home since that night.

ANDREI: Everyone has disappeared to somewhere or other. Even father left for the city.

JEREN (*softly to GARAEVA*): He telephoned. Asked to tell you, if you came, to wait.

GARAEVA (*glancing at wrist watch*): Kolya didn't spend the night at home, either. He's on duty somewhere.

ANDREI: "Home." How strange that word sounds now! "Home."

JEREN: Sh-h. (*Listens.*) Tanya is calling. She's awakened.

ANDREI: Let me go to her. I'll kiss her once more. (*Enters house.*)

GARAEVA (*hurriedly*): I've decided. I'm going with Ivan. I'll leave everything and go.

JEREN: Perhaps it would be better to remain. And wait.

GARAEVA: How long to wait?

JEREN: When one loves—one doesn't ask.

GARAEVA: No, I can't. I'm not like that.

(BUTAGA, in uniform, and his mother ANNA GRIGOREVNA enter the garden, followed by VERA.)

BUTAGA: Is the comrade Senior Commissar here?

JEREN: Who?

VERA: Andrei Timofeovitch.

JEREN: Oh yes, please. Good evening, Anna Grigorevna.

ANNA GRIGOREVNA: Good evening. You're saying your farewells. Everywhere there are scenes of parting. Husbands, sons, fathers. . . . But there are no tears. Because we feel entirely different. When I sent off my husband in 1914, I nearly cried my eyes out. But now, my son is leaving, and I don't cry. (*Her eyes fill with tears. She turns away.*)

BUTAGA (*strokes her hair*): Aw, mother, I'll bring back three orders from war . . . and you're crying.

ANNA GRIGOREVNA: I'm an old woman, Vasya—the tears come by themselves. (*Trying to laugh.*) Old Martinova told my fortune. She said, "Wait for pleasant news. Your son has a broad path before him, and at the end of the road lies success. . . ."

BUTAGA: Well, that's what I'm telling you—three orders.

VERA: Anna Grigorevna and I are going to work in the hospital. She as helper, I as nurse. Daddy has already signed us up.

ANNA GRIGOREVNA (*to son*): Why do you hold my hand? Don't hang on to me; go and hold hers. (*Points to VERA.*) Well, get along with you.

(BUTAGA approaches VERA, but sees ANDREI coming out of the house.)

BUTAGA (*saluting*): Comrade Senior Commissar, permit me to report the truck is waiting.

ANDREI (*saluting*): Well, then, we can set off. Do you know the route?

BUTAGA: Follow the third platoon of the head column.

ANDREI: Have you made your farewells?

BUTAGA: Didn't quite have time to finish, Comrade Senior Commissar.

ANDREI (*glancing at watch*): Ten minutes.

BUTAGA: Return in ten minutes. Vera, let's run to our nook. Where we went fishing?

VERA: Let's!

(BUTAGA and VERA leave hand-in-hand. MAMONTOV enters the garden. He is in the uniform of a military doctor, with an order pinned on his coat.)

MAMONTOV (*calling after them*): Where to, where to? But by the way—that's right. Phew, what heat! (*Greeting each one.*) At headquarters it's impossible to get through to the general. Then I had a cunning idea. This house he won't pass by. And here's where I'll get all my business done. If you'd only see the hospital we're organizing, Sofia Pavlovna! It's a beauty. I've always asserted any fool can create a human being, but only science can snatch a human being from the clutches of death. And we won't let death have our wounded, will we, Anna Grigorevna?

ANNA GRIGOREVNA: That we won't.

MAMONTOV: But the Germans, what do you think about them, the swine! Eh?

ANDREI: German fascism.

MAMONTOV: None of that, please. Fascism—fascism, but it's the Germans who are guilty, and we'll square accounts with them.

(IVAN enters garden, in full-dress general's uniform with two orders.)

MAMONTOV (*hurries to greet him*): Ivan Timofeovitch—Oh, sorry! Comrade Major-General. (*Takes him by the arm and leads him aside.*)

JEREN (*to ANNA GRIGOREVNA*): Let's go aside a little. And you, Andrei, occupy the doctor somehow . . . (*Inclining head toward GARAIEVA.*) Please.

ANNA GRIGOREVNA: You're always concerning yourself about other people's happiness . . . That means—you have much of your own. (JEREN and ANNA GRIGOREVNA enter the house. ANDREI approaches MAMONTOV.)

IVAN: You'll get your trucks. I'll see to it.

ANDREI: Zachar Zacharovitch, just a moment. . . . (Leads him aside toward the woods.)

IVAN (looking around): Where's everybody? (Approaches GARAEVA.) How good it is that I've found you. I thought we wouldn't see each other again.

GARAEVA: I'm going with you.

IVAN: With me? Where to?

GARAEVA: Wherever you go.

IVAN (after a pause): No, Sofia Pavlovna. . . . Two days ago I asked us both—what our future life would be. Well, this is how it has shaped itself—war. And that means to live and breathe only for one's country. I loved you—and I love you—perhaps more than ever . . . but now I cannot even speak of love . . . nor think about it. . . . You cannot go with me. And perhaps you'd better not wait for me. . . . (Pause.)

GARAEVA (slowly): I'll wait for you. (Embraces and kisses IVAN.) Go.

(KOLYA runs into garden.)

KOLYA: Mother! Congratulate me! I've been accepted! I've enlisted! Only ten out of our whole class were accepted! I'm leaving today.

GARAEVA: What! You also!

KOLYA (drawing up before IVAN): Comrade Major-General, permit me to report. . . .

IVAN: Stay with your mother, Kolya. (Moves aside. BUTAGA and VERA, entering from the woods, approach him.)

BUTAGA (drawing up before IVAN); I've come as ordered—in ten minutes. May I begin to load up?

IVAN: Yes. (BUTAGA enters house. IVAN addresses VERA.) Write to him often. You know how every line from home is valued.

GARAEVA (to KOLYA): You are leaving . . . of course. What am I thinking of. It was to be expected . . . you acted splendidly, my son.

It's just a little sudden . . . it's nothing. I'll soon become accustomed. Go . . . only let me gaze at you for the last time. . . . (*BUTAGA carrying suitcase comes out of the house. JEREN and ANNA GRIGOREVNA follow him. ANDREI and MAMONTOV approach from woods.*)

ANDREI: Well—our time's up!

ANNA GRIGOREVNA: Vasya dear, bend down, and close your eyes! Close them, I tell you! (*She hurriedly makes the sign of the cross over him.*) Now, open them. You have a gentle soul, my boy, but now forget all pity. Fight them fiercely. Your fist, thank Heaven, is strong enough—do you understand?

BUTAGA: I shan't return without three crosses—just remember that.

ANNA GRIGOREVNA: And don't worry your head about me. I'll get along. You better watch out—I may come myself to the front! (*All move toward the gate. TIMOFEI approaches.*)

TIMOFEI: Phew! I made it after all! I thought I wouldn't see you. Andrusha, Vanya, let me take a look at you, what you look like now.

ANDREI: Where've you been all this time?

TIMOFEI: How—where? At the factory, of course. One isn't going to live on a pension now. I'm again at the foundry. They were waiting for me. Vasya's gone, and many others. "Take your place, Timofei," they cried. So I took my place. I fulfilled three schedules in the excitement of the moment. (*To IVAN.*) The army won't have reason to be sore at us. Ah—what's the use of words? (*Embraces his sons.*) Go, go my children. We didn't begin this war—but we'll finish it! .

(*All leave garden. In the silence which falls, a military march is heard coming over the radio. Sounds of trucks driving off and the voice of JEREN.*)

JEREN (*offstage*): Good-bye, beloved ones!

(*Sounds of the march become louder.*)

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

The same garden. Again night. But now only the moon illuminates the trees and house. Darkness is everywhere. There are no lights, either in the house or in the city across the river.

KATERINA is sitting on the bench near the shore. She is watching JEREN carry the potted plants into a shelter dug in the ground.

GARAEVA is helping JEREN.

KATYA: Do you really hide this wheat every night?

JEREN: And mornings I carry the plants back again.

KATYA: I couldn't live like that. I thought it would be calmer in the country. But here, I find the same darkness, the same vigilance—preparations. Everyone is waiting for something—everyone is afraid.

JEREN: We are not afraid.

KATYA: Oh, please don't treat me as if I were a little girl. We are all afraid, only we hide the fact. There are all kinds of rumors in the city . . . one worse than the other. Everyone advises us to leave.

GARAEVA: No one is stopping you. Leave for whatever place you wish, Katerina Filipovna; only, for goodness' sake, don't whine.

KATYA: Why do you become angry, Sofia Pavlovna? Is it my fault that I'm afraid? After all, it's only natural.

GARAEVA: You've just become slovenly. You've let yourself go; you do nothing—you've given up your music—sit around all muffled up—and—whine!

KATYA: I simply can't think of music in such a time. I'm always waiting—waiting for something terrible to happen.

GARAEVA: Nothing can be more terrible than a young woman who doesn't take care of her appearance. If Kolya would only see you now . . .

KATYA: Oh—Kolya. He doesn't even write.

GARAEVA: He doesn't write me either. They haven't time for letters now.

KATYA: Perhaps Kolya isn't alive any more. (GARAeva drops pot she is carrying.)

JEREN: It's nothing at all, please. Leave it like that. Tomorrow we'll replant it. We'll be having letters soon—I know. After all, it's only two weeks.

KATYA: Two weeks. It seems like an eternity. If only it would finish quickly.

GARAeva: Everything's still ahead of us.

KATYA: Don't frighten me! As it is, I'm frightened enough. No, I can't stand this. We must run, run. The Germans are stronger than we are.

GARAeva (*approaching her and shaking her by the shoulders*): Be quiet! This very instant! You can be a coward, but don't you dare try to justify your cowardliness by slandering our army and—all of us.

KATYA: Oh, let me be. (*Begins to cry.*)

JEREN: Your tears aren't worth the salt in them. Entirely cheap tears. Go to bed.

KATYA: I'm all worn out. I'm really ill.

JEREN: You'll be better when the sun comes up. (*To GARAeva*) Please, that pot yonder . . . higher up. This one is Andrei's favorite. He's been working with it for ten years. (KATYA gets up and slouches toward the house.)

GARAeva: There's one thing I'm grateful to war for. It's shown people as they really are. . . . Why, Kolya liked that flighty little bird! She twittered and chirruped, evidently seemed attractive.

JEREN: Oh, I bit her a long time ago.

GARAeva: Bit her?

JEREN: Perhaps, bit through her?

GARAeva: Perhaps you mean—you saw through her? (*They look at each other and laugh.*)

JEREN: Oh, I'm much better now. The first year I came from Turkmenistan, I made such awful mistakes.

GARAeva: I know—and we all loved it. You know I almost wanted to do something more than shake that hysterical ninny. It's people like her who create panic.

JEREN: Katya has had a very peaceful life. She's never had any obstacles—any struggles in her life. And then she cares for nothing outside her own comfort.

(TIMOFEI enters the garden.)

TIMOFEI: A priori—is anyone at home?

JEREN: Timofei Ilitch, please. Why didn't you come home yesterday?

TIMOFEI: I haven't left the foundry for two nights, little mistress. It's come to such a state, the workers have to be forcibly made to leave. Abstractly, it's difficult to imagine, the things we're casting now.

JEREN: I'll get dinner.

TIMOFEI: I dined in the factory. Don't get up. (*Sits down.*) The very souls of people are ablaze. The hatred of the Germans has become so fierce that when we cast the steel—I beg your pardon—we swear like troopers. Ah-h, the beasts! We splash water on ourselves for the heat—and again into the ovens. Never mind, little mistress, we'll pour our steel into their throats. By the way, are there any letters?

JEREN: There'll be some soon.

TIMOFEI: I suppose they haven't the time. Fervid times we're living through. Most terrible battles taking place. Four thousand tanks at one time—it's difficult to conceive.

GARAEVA: Any news from the front?

TIMOFEI: The German devil is pushing forward. He sacrifices his soldiers without counting, but pushes on . . .

GARAEVA: And for how long will they, as now . . . advance?

TIMOFEI: I think—for a long time. The whole heavy machine burst upon us. They have no other alternative, except to push on—as they can . . . (*VERA and ANNA GRIGOREVNA hurriedly enter.*)

VERA: News! We've news!

ANNA GRIGOREVNA (*scarcely able to keep up*): Don't listen to her—let me tell you.

VERA: Vasya captured a German officer, and carried him to our lines!

JEREN and GARAEVA: Did you receive a letter?

ANNA GRIGOREVNA: In the hospital . . . one of the wounded . . .

VERA: From their company, Anna Grigorevna and I found out. Vasya captured a German.

ANNA GRIGOREVNA (*almost weeping*): I beg you, in the name of the Lord—let me tell it.

VERA: I want to tell them.

JEREN: Please, Vera. Let Anna Grigorevna. She doesn't speak so fast. It's easier for me to understand her.

TIMOFEI (*seating ANNA GRIGOREVNA on the bench*): Don't torture us.

ANNA GRIGOREVNA: Phew, wait till I get my breath.

VERA: You breathe, and I'll begin, in the meantime.

ANNA GRIGOREVNA (*hurriedly*): Well, so, we entered the hospital to go on duty, and what do we see? The wounded have arrived. And one of them keeps asking—it's evident his leg hurts him badly—Isn't it possible to send for Anna Grigorevna? "My dear, but it's I; here I am." He didn't want to believe it at first. Just imagine such a coincidence!

VERA: I dressed his wound. Even father couldn't find any fault.

ANNA GRIGOREVNA: All right. So we sat down at his bedside, and he begins to talk. Inform their relatives that all of yours are alive and well. They were in battle several times. The Germans encircled them, and my Vasya lifted the machine gun in his arms and begins turning with it, here and there. Shoots and turns, shoots and turns, so that the Germans couldn't attack. . . . Then Andrei Timofeovitch commands, "Battalion into attack!"

VERA: And there were only seven of ours.

ANNA GRIGOREVNA: And all seven cried "Hurrah" and rushed into the attack. And they broke through! One of them was wounded in the leg, three were killed. But they broke through. And Vasya carried off his machine gun.

VERA: And then, the officer.

ANNA GRIGOREVNA: And then the officer, Andrei Timofeovitch, ordered, "Bring in a live German." Well, so Vasya brought one in. Such a gentle boy, nevertheless carried out orders . . . my Vasya. (*Begins to cry.*)

VERA: You cry a little now, and I'll continue.

ANNA GRIGOREVNA: No, thank you. . . . Well. He says, they have nothing to complain of, praise the Lord. We'll write when we rest up a bit. That's not so easy. Once, they continued fighting three nights, without sleep. Your Nikolai, Sofia Pavlovna, got a motorcycle for himself. He noticed where the Germans drive to scout out information, climbed a tree, like a woodpecker, and when a German drove by, he sprang from the tree, right onto the saddle, tied the hands of the astounded German behind his back, pressed the pedal, and straight to our lines. Not so bad. They praised him for it.

GARAEVA: Kolya . . . My little son.

TIMOFEI: That's what they've become, these children of ours—and where's the general?

ANNA GRIGOREVNA: He didn't see the general. I suppose he's not in their section. And everyone respects your Andrei. Just think, to cry "Hurrah, forward," and he himself the first to go in, and only seven of them! (*All become silent. In the house KATYA tries to play something on the piano.*)

JEREN: They left us, but they are here. Greetings, Andrei.

GARAEVA: Greetings, Kolya.

VERA: Vasya, greetings. (*Pause. Suddenly, far-off sounds of sirens are heard.*)

JEREN: What's that?

TIMOFEI (*softly*): It's the alarm.

GARAEVA: The first alarm. (*KATYA runs out of the house.*)

KATYA: Do you hear that? Do you hear! They'll kill us! We'll all be killed!

JEREN (*authoritatively and loudly*): I command you to be silent! Follow me. Get in there. It's absolutely safe! Go on! And don't harm the plants. (*KATYA crawls into the shelter.*) Please, Anna Grigorevna. You also.

ANNA GRIGOREVNA: Oh, no, my dear. I've lived my life. I shan't creep in there. I'd like to sit in the most conspicuous place with my knitting, but it's too dark—so they'd know, the scoundrels, that even old women don't fear them.

(*In the silence which falls, the drone of approaching airplanes is*

heard. Immediately the white lightning of many projectors flashes across the sky in various places across the river. The sky becomes dotted with the unheard explosions of the antiaircraft guns.)

GARAEVA: They're flying. . . . They're flying.

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE TWO

Morning. The same house and garden. A camouflaged antiaircraft gun glistens through its covering of leaves and branches. The house and terrace are also camouflaged with branches and young trees, which give the place a festive appearance. Under the birch tree, a freshly made hillock indicates entrance to a bomb shelter. Cable lines lead into the shelter. At the gate, stands a sentry.

GARAEVA is reading to the men of the battery, who sit and lounge on the steps and lawn.

GARAEVA (*reading from Tolstoy's "War and Peace"*): "In captivity in the shed that had been his prison, Pierre had learned not through his intellect, but through his whole being, through life, that man is created for happiness, that happiness lies in himself, in the satisfaction of his natural human cravings; that all unhappiness is due not to lack of what is needful, but to superfluity. But now, during the last three weeks of the march, he had learned another new and consolatory truth—he had learned that there is nothing terrible to be dreaded in the world."

(IVAN and two commanders enter the garden. He makes a sign to the guard on duty not to interrupt the reading. After whispering something to the commanders, who go off to the right towards the woods, he stands listening.)

GARAEVA: "The harder his lot became, the more terrible his future,

the more independent of his present plight were the glad and soothing thoughts, memories, and images that occurred to him." (*She raises her head, sees IVAN.*) Ivan Timofeovitch!

IVAN: Continue, please.

GARAEVA (*to Red Army men*): The comrades will forgive me for the interruption. (*Hurriedly descends.*) What fate brought you here? When?

IVAN: Today.

GARAEVA: For long?

IVAN: That remains to be seen. And what are you doing here?

GARAEVA: Oh, I'm a frequent guest here at the battery. All our actors at some time or other have appeared before them. But you . . . (*Softly*) My dear . . . to see you so suddenly. . . . If you only knew how happy I am.

IVAN: "Man was created for happiness." . . . Yes. We didn't think a month ago that antiaircraft guns would stand in this garden. Swiftly. Events outstrip time. Is it very awful during the air raids?

GARAEVA (*answering in the same tone*): "There is nothing terrible to be dreaded in this world." But, really, the first night was rather well, difficult; then, when I myself extinguished the first incendiary bomb, I suddenly realized that I'm not afraid any more. I'm afraid of nothing. By the way, my apartment was demolished—bombed—I'm living with friends. One has many friends now. The war has brought people together. . . . But that's not what I wanted to speak about . . . You've come. What does that mean?

IVAN: That means that you must leave. The Germans are approaching the city. You must leave.

GARAEVA: Now, when you've come? Never.

IVAN: Especially now. I cannot take care of you.

GARAEVA: I can take care of myself, Ivan Timofeovitch!

IVAN: But I will think about you. And now, I haven't the right to think of you. . . . My division is retreating. I have never retreated before anyone. I couldn't imagine it possible—abandon villages and towns, blow up bridges, burn storehouses. But these things are neces-

sary; we must experience all this, and at the same time keep a head on our shoulders. I ask you—don't argue with me . . . depart.

GARAEVA (*after pause*): Forgive me. I will leave. But tell me, will our answering blow be soon? When will we begin to attack?

IVAN (*taking the book from her hands, and hunting through it*): "War and Peace." (*Reads.*) "'Time and patience, these are my champions!' thought Kutuzov. He knew the apple must not be picked while it was green. It will fall of itself when ripe, but if you pick it green, you spoil the apple and the tree and set your teeth on edge. Like an experienced hunter, he knew the beast was wounded, wounded as only the whole force of Russia could wound it; but whether to death or not, was a question not yet solved."

GARAEVA: You'll see that I can be patient. (*Takes letter out of purse.*) Yesterday I received a letter from Kolya, from the front. It took ten days to come. For some reason or other, the boy thinks I'm nervous, and tries to reassure me as if he were the older one . . . just as you do.

IVAN: Your son is no longer a boy. He is a man, a fighter. He really is older than you. (*JEREN and PRIVATE OLESHUK approach them and carefully scrutinize the plants placed in the sunshine.*)

JEREN (*examining pot*): Waxy ripeness. It's quite ready.

OLESHUK (*jotting down in his notebook*): Shall I count the harvest? (*Starts to break off ear of wheat.*)

JEREN: Don't, please. We'll keep this variety until the grains themselves fall. Then we'll note how long they stood.

OLESHUK: That's wise. During the harvesting, the sturdiness of the grain is of first importance for the combines. Some wheat is too fragile . . . it scatters too soon.

JEREN: This will be a sturdy specimen. (*Notices that OLESHUK has hastily placed pot on ground and come to attention.*) What's the matter? (*Sees IVAN.*) Ivan!

IVAN (*embracing her*): I had no idea—I thought the house was empty.

JEREN: Why empty?

IVAN: But the guns!

JEREN: The guns don't harm the wheat. Please—Gnat Oleshuk, agronomist. My helper.

OLESHUK (*reporting*): With the permission of the Commander of the Battery, Comrade Major-General, I was ordered to help in time free from duty.

IVAN: From what parts do you come?

OLESHUK: From Poltava, Ukraine. I was acquainted with Comrade Zavalov. Our collective farm uses his seeds. Famous seeds.

IVAN: Well then, Jeren, hand over the management of the center to Oleshuk—and begin to pack. Don't stare at me with such wide eyes. The front line is nearing. We are sending all those from the city whom it is possible to get along without.

JEREN: But it's impossible to get along without me.

IVAN: Sofia Pavlovna, explain it all to her. Unfortunately I must leave.

JEREN: I understand everything, dear. When Andrei took his farewell, his last words were, "Take care of the wheat." I promised him. And I will keep my promise. A hundred acres—I wrote him not to worry. We can bring in the harvest in a week's time.

IVAN: In a week, guns will be shooting here.

JEREN: Why, they're welcome, please. I don't interfere with the guns. Antiaircraft guns shoot all the time now, and I don't interfere. Isn't that so, Gnat?

OLESHUK: Precisely, no interference whatsoever.

JEREN: My little daughter's safe; she's with her grandmother. She's living very well there, and I here. Just think—all Andrei's labors. Ten years he's waited for such a harvest.

IVAN: If Andrei were here now, he himself would say to you . . .

JEREN: He would say, "Jeren, hand me the notebook. How are the seeds getting on?" Also he'd say, "What's that noise? Is that thunder? We must cover the sowing seeds from the storm." "But, Andrei, that's the Germans shooting." "Aha, then let's continue." I'm necessary here. The Commander of the Battery gave me permission. I cook Turkoman pilaw for the men. Isn't that so, Gnat?

OLESHUK: Famous pilaw, Commander Major-General.

JEREN: I also know how to throw hand grenades. And I'm learning how to manage a machine gun. Please.

OLESHUK: Permit me to report, Commander Major-General, with the permission of the Commander of the Battery, in the time free from duty we teach the population warfare tactics. Jeren Andreevna is an excellent pupil.

IVAN (*smiling*): Why Andreevna?

OLESHUK: Her paternal name is so complicated, it's impossible to pronounce. And since it sounds too familiar to call her by her first name, we decided to call her amongst ourselves Andreevna—according to her husband's name.

(*One of his Commanders approaches IVAN.*)

COMMANDER: The positions have been noted. Permit me to make a report.

IVAN: Make your report. (*Goes aside to table under birch tree.*) Sofia Pavlovna, at least, you try to convince her.

GARAEVA: I envy her.

IVAN (*smiling*): It's difficult to keep from softening, amongst you. And I mustn't be mollified, do you understand? (*To COMMANDER.*) Well!

COMMANDER (*pointing to map*): The front edge of the defense can pass along sand hill, with an exit on the . . . (*IVAN bends over map.*)

GARAEVA: Lucky one. You won out for yourself.

JEREN: I shall speak of you to him, all the time. (*MAMONTOV and TIMOFEI enter the garden.*)

MAMONTOV (*seeing IVAN*): Aha! I told you he'd be here. I've won the half dozen.

TIMOFEI: Sh-h-h. He's commanding. (*Softly.*) My Vanya! My son! He came to defend us.

MAMONTOV (*to GARAEVA*): Command has been given to evacuate the hospital. The boat's already waiting. We're loading up. I demanded to know, Whose orders? The Commander of the division. Who's the commander? Zavalov. When? Arrived last night.

TIMOFEI: My Vanya.

MAMONTOV: I roused Timofei. We're living together, in one room

now—for convenience' sake. You didn't believe it—ha? Don't forget you owe me a half dozen bottles.

TIMOFEI: A priori, Zachar. After the war . . . See, he's pointing out something on the map. Preparing pincers for the Germans.

MAMONTOV: Once upon a time guests were given tea in this house.

JEREN: Please, I'll bring you some. Sit down, please. (*Enters house.*)

MAMONTOV: Well, this morning I was at headquarters. Couldn't find him. Searched everywhere. Absolutely necessary locate the General. And then a bright idea came to me—of course, the country house. And here he is. (*To GARAeva.*) You see, the thing is this—I personally don't intend leaving for anywhere.

GARAeva: Then you'd better leave as quickly as possible. He's angry enough without you. I've already had a discussion with him.

MAMONTOV: And what?

GARAeva: I'm leaving.

MAMONTOV: So. Let's change the subject, for the sake of clarity. (*JEREN brings tea.*)

JEREN: Please.

MAMONTOV (*mechanically reaching for cup, and thinking his own thoughts*): Metaphysics.

TIMOFEI: And you, daughter, are you also leaving? (*JEREN shakes head negatively.*) That means we'll be together. Splendid.

MAMONTOV (*choking on his tea and jumping up*): Ah! I've got it! (*Places cup on table, approaches IVAN, loudly reporting.*) Commander Major-General, permit me to report.

IVAN (*lifting head*): Ah-h-h! Zachar Zacharovitch. What—not enough trucks?

MAMONTOV: As ordered, the hospital's being loaded onto the boat. I've organized a field hospital with the personnel remaining, having taken the management upon myself.

IVAN: What do you mean—with those remaining! Have you remained?

MAMONTOV: In the field hospital, on the front lines.

IVAN (*gazing at him*): Oho, Zachar Zacharovitch! So you got

around me! A flank attack! (*Laughs. MAMONTOV joins in.*) Father! And you, of course, also are here. (*Approaches him.*) Well, my friends, have it your own way. We will fight. For you, and together with you. (*Looks at GARAeva, takes her hand, and leads her to TIMOFEI.*) Well, Father, you wanted to marry me—on this very spot. I'm an obedient son. This is my wife, Father.

TIMOFEI: Vanya, my son.

IVAN: And she stays here with us.

GARAeva: Oh, thank you.

IVAN: I shan't see you until the end of the battle. And the battle will be a long one. If we are fated not to see each other after the end—be brave!

JEREN and GARAeva: We promise!

IVAN (*looking at them*): Well! Raise your heads high. Heads high, my friends. We must look war in the face, bravely and gayly. Yes, gayly, the devil take it! There's joy in battle for us. We're fighting for our land, for our people, for our homes. I'm telling you in advance there's going to be a hot time here. The city's site puts us at a disadvantage. But the Germans shall leave here so many of their soldiers that the river shall redden. . . . No matter how many divisions the enemy pours in, they will all remain here. We'll exhaust them, bit by bit, tear them to pieces. Yes, I retreat. But the results? My division is entire, but the three German divisions haven't even half their number. Now they've thrown against us three new fresh ones—and the same thing will happen to them. Our fresh troops haven't even come up. And do you know how many fresh troops we have? (*Smiling softly.*) It's a military secret, nevertheless, I'll tell you. So many, it's difficult to count! And all of them are waiting. Preparing. Do you understand?

TIMOFEI: We've always understood, Vanya!

IVAN: And about the land—well, it's impossible to carry off the land to Berlin.

(MAMONTOV *sings*. GARAeva, JEREN, and TIMOFEI *are joining in when suddenly the voice of the scout is heard.*)

SCOUT: To the air!

(The gunners rush to guns. A voice is heard giving words of the command.)

VOICE: On the horizon, to the right! Catch target! Height forty naught naught thirty-five . . .

(The muzzle of the gun, swinging at its base, searches the sky. A voice is heard.)

VOICE: Target caught!

IVAN: Amen!

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE ONE

July dawn, in Zavalov's garden. All the windows are shattered. The door has been wrenched from the hinges. The camouflaged branches and leaves have withered and dried. The wall and gate are broken. The splintered birch tree lies near the garden bench. The garden is empty.

From time to time, across the river, dull reverberations of artillery fire are heard.

ANDREI cautiously looks through the break in the wall and then enters. He is thin, unshaven; his uniform is tattered, his boots dusty. He climbs up to window sill, peers into the house, then gives a short whistle.

In answer to his signal, the Red Army man GETASHVILI, loaded down with automatic machine gun and bayonets, enters the garden.

BUTAGA follows, carrying KOLYA.

ANDREI: The place is empty.

GETASHVILI (*placing weapons on the ground, and spreading empty sacks on the bench*): Lie down, comrade. Time to rest.

KOLYA (*suppressing groan, as BUTAGA carefully sets him down*): I shan't let you carry me any farther. You've had enough bother.

BUTAGA: We've had just about enough from you on that subject. Lie down.

KOLYA: You must leave me here, do you understand? You'll never get to our lines with such a dead weight.

ANDREI: Private Garaev, I command you not to discuss the orders of your commanders. Getashvili, Butaga, come here. (*Leads them aside.*) Everyone has left. That means the Germans are in the city.

GETASHVILI: But why the Germans, Katso?

ANDREI: Jeren has left. I know her. She'd never have abandoned everything like this. (*Points to plants.*) They're ripe. They can be harvested. And she left. (*Pause. GETASHVILI whistles "Sulico."*)

ANDREI: How is Nikolai?

BUTAGA: He's got grit, but it's dangerous to carry him farther. He must have a doctor.

ANDREI: There's no crossing the river, if the Germans are in town. The only thing left to us is to continue along the left bank, under cover of darkness. We'll have to keep in hiding during the daytime. It's impossible to remain here. Even now we may be in danger. How many cartridges have we left?

GETASHVILI: Seventeen, Katso. And four—for us. We've no more hand grenades. The last one we used on that cistern of gasoline which we blew up. What a bonfire for shashlik. Pity there wasn't a young lamb about.

BUTAGA: There were only swine—and all of them German.

KOLYA: What are you whispering about? Anyway, I shan't permit myself to be carried farther. I refuse to obey. Three healthy men must not perish because of a useless one.

ANDREI (*to GETASHVILI*): Sandro, go out to the river, scout out the situation, and bring back some water. (*GETASHVILI leaves.*)

BUTAGA (*longingly*): How about a swim, Timofeevitch? Eh?

ANDREI: In the evening, Vasya—and in the reeds.

KOLYA: Andrei, old man, come here for a moment. (*ANDREI comes up. KOLYA takes his hand.*) Do you remember our vow? You told us that we must learn to scorn death. Well, I absolutely scorn it. Do you understand? Honor bright, please believe me, as a fighter, as a comrade, as a man! Just leave me a revolver. The rest of you must go on. The army needs you—they're waiting for you. They think

you've all perished. You'll tell them how well we fought the Germans in their rear. No, please don't interrupt. You'll report about the two bridges we blew up, the two gasoline columns we set fire to, the regiment headquarters we destroyed with hand grenades. Do you have the staff documents with you?

ANDREI: Yes.

KOLYA: You must deliver them to our headquarters. Do you understand? The documents—not me, a cripple.

ANDREI: We are four, while you are with us. Without you, there are only three.

KOLYA: I'm no longer a fighter.

ANDREI: You are alive, you breathe—that means you are a fighter, our comrade. He who abandons a comrade is a coward and a dog! Enough of this. (*Stretches.*) Haven't had a sip of beer for a long time. A nice bottle of iced beer—ha! a poet's dream.

BUTAGA (*breaking a branch in two*): Don't torture a fellow, Timofeovitch. (*Takes out three iron crosses from his pocket, fastens them to his shirt.*) Three iron crosses for a mug of beer. Ha, ha! How that little German beat it out the window. Makes for the bushes—in his pink shorts.

KOLYA: Blue, Vasya.

BUTAGA: Pink, Kolya. I particularly noticed.

KOLYA: And I saw blue.

BUTAGA: All right, all right, have it your way. But anyway they were pink. Funny little German. Feudal lord, I suppose. (*Draws KOLYA's attention to ANDREI who is busy among the plants, breaking off the wheat ears, and carefully placing the grains in separate pieces of paper.*) A handy man, that commander of ours.

KOLYA (*softly*): That's his wheat.

BUTAGA: As if there wasn't a war on. But do you remember when he saved our wounded comrade from those two Germans who were torturing him? Wouldn't let anyone else do it. And his eyes were such at that moment that although, by George, my fists were nothing to complain of . . . even I was afraid of him at that moment.

(GETASHVILI enters leading an old woman.)

GETASHVILI: Step more lively, granny; don't be afraid; these are your own people. (*To ANDREI.*) I met this old woman, Katso, and brought her here, just to make sure. Question her.

OLD WOMAN (*throwing off her shawl and straightening up*): Oh, Lord! Oh, Gracious Sovereign! My Vasya! (*Rushes to BUTAGA.*)

BUTAGA: Hold on! (*Picks up old woman, inspects her.*) It's she! Timofeovitch, it's she! Mama!

ANNA GRIGOREVNA: My little son. Praise the Lord.

BUTAGA: But Mama, what's happened, why do you look like this?

ANNA GRIGOREVNA: It's all a sham, son! I wander through the woods and pretend. Pretend I'm a deaf, stupid old woman who doesn't understand anything. But I keep sharp eyes in my head all the time. I see everything that's going on. Andrei Timofeovitch! Little Kolya! How happy they'll be!

ANDREI: They? Why, is anyone here?

ANNA GRIGOREVNA: We're all here, my dear. We're all guerrilla fighters!

BUTAGA: Hurrah! Forward, attack! (*Seizes his mother in his arms and whirls around wildly.*) Where are they? Call them!

ANNA GRIGOREVNA: Of course. Oh, Lord, I'm all mixed up—forgot-ten everything. (*Searches in pocket of skirt, takes out whistle and begins to blow it.*)

BUTAGA: Mama, what's the matter with you!

ANNA GRIGOREVNA: They've taught me things in my old age. I'm whistling the parole! (*Waits.*) They can't hear. The guns interfere. I'll run and tell them.

BUTAGA: Hold on. They'll hear now. (*Begins to sing their song. ANDREI and KOLYA join in. JEREN cautiously appears around corner of the house. She is wearing boots and leather jacket, and holds a revolver in her hand. Around her belt, hand grenades are hung.*)

ANDREI (*seeing her*): Jeren! (*Rushes to her, and then stops, crying out in hoarse voice.*) Where's Tanya?

JEREN: Far away! With grandmother. She's well and happy . . . (*Rushes to him.*)

ANNA GRIGOREVNA: Vasya, run to Timofei, call him. Oh, no, you won't be able to find it alone.

BUTAGA (*lifting her up*): Show me.

ANNA GRIGOREVNA: Straight through the woods, then take that path—there on the left of the river. Vera's there.

BUTAGA (*nearly dropping his mother*): Oh-h! Forward, attack! (*Runs off, carrying his mother.*)

JEREN (*embracing KOLYA*): Darling. You're wounded!

KOLYA: Just a scratch. Where's mother, Jeren? Is she with you?

JEREN: She's in town, Kolya. She's a nurse in Zachar Zacharovitch's hospital. We'll call her, or take you there.

ANDREI: That means the city's still ours?

JEREN: Still ours. Twenty thousand Germans have fallen at the gates of the city. Ivan has promised at least another ten thousand. It's his division that's holding the town. The battle's been going on now for eight days. None of the population has left, they're all fighting, helping the Red Army men. . . . Let me look at you. You're somehow different. I often saw your face in my dreams, Andrei. Your eyes . . . in your eyes I see war . . . Kolya's also. You are warriors now.

ANDREI: Just as you, Jeren.

JEREN (*approaching GETASHVILI*): Hello. Is your family also here in our town?

GETASHVILI: I'm alone on this earth. I'm an orphan.

JEREN: Oh, no. You have a sister. (*Approaches and kisses him.*) You're my brother.

GETASHVILI: Comrade. . . . (*Takes off his revolver.*) Take it. It's sacred. Give me yours. So now, sister! (*Turns quickly to ANDREI.*) Permit me to leave to make observations.

ANDREI: Scout out the road at Privalov near the hill. (*GETASHVILI salutes, looks at JEREN as he leaves. To JEREN.*) We passed the wheat field. Eighty-seven grains to an ear! And the grains haven't scattered, in spite of the wind and drought. But who has begun to sow the wheat?

JEREN: We have, Andrei. The guerrillas have scythes. We'll gather in the harvest. The collective farmers are helping us, and we'll send

the grain off on barges. We still have time. Your labor shall not be lost, Andrei. And this variety, also. (*Looks at pots.*) Who has touched them?

ANDREI: Don't be upset, Jeren. It was I. I thought you had left.

JEREN: Did you really think that I'd leave without these? Why, you asked me. You know you could be absolutely sure. Then, it means you didn't believe me?

ANDREI: Forgive me.

JEREN (*smiling*): Our first quarrel. No, not really quarrel, just an understanding.

ANDREI: You wanted to say "misunderstanding"? But perhaps it really is an understanding. (*Kisses her.*)

JEREN (*softly*): Is Kolya in danger?

ANDREI: He must have a doctor immediately. We don't know. We hope it's not serious.

(TIMOFEI, VERA, BUTAGA *quickly enter. Both TIMOFEI and VERA are armed.*)

TIMOFEI: My dear ones! Again we see each other!

KOLYA: A priori, Timofei Ilitch!

JEREN: Please, Vera. His wound must be dressed. Have you bandages?

VERA: I've everything with me. Vasya told me. A pity Dad isn't here.

TIMOFEI: Time for you to be on your own, daughter.

VERA: Just be a little patient, Kolya dear. You know I'm an inexperienced doctor. Vasya, hold this.

KOLYA: Give me your hand, Jeren. There, that's better. (*Winces.*) Don't pay any attention to me, doctor; continue.

TIMOFEI: Well, Andrei, what a time we're living in! I've become head of a guerrilla detachment. The Germans aren't in the city yet, but we've all become guerrillas. We've dug in, stationed patrols everywhere—just as in old times of Civil War. Only then we marched barefooted, one bayonet to the five of us. But now (*shows his revolver*) it can carry thirty-two bullets. (*Laughs.*) The beer factory is working full speed. Only instead of beer, gasoline is poured into the bottles. And the bottles, straight at the German tanks. You under-

stand? It works just like a restaurant. We've a caseful under there.
(*Indicates a hiding place under the terrace.*)

ANDREI: What about the city?

TIMOFEI: Well . . . Ivan has one division; the Germans have about three left. The entire river's cluttered with their corpses. It's caused the level of the water to rise. They're hell bent on getting the city. Let them fill up the river, the more the merrier. I saw the General, the day before yesterday. He ordered us to be ready for anything.

ANDREI: You seem to have grown younger.

TIMOFEI: How otherwise? Years should be worn lightly, not like a load. I didn't study philosophy for nothing. "Nothing from an indefinite something is definitely nothing." That was especially written about Hitler. Yes, yes, describes him to a T.

JEREN (*approaching them*): Vera whispered to me that Kolya needs help immediately. Sometimes ambulances pass by here. I'm going to try to find one. (*Leaves.*)

TIMOFEI: If he could only see his mother. She bandages the wounded right in the thickest of battle. I tell you, she creeps right under the very guns. And it's impossible to drive her away. After all, she's Mrs. General.

KOLYA: Vasya, maybe we'll have a wedding now, just for good luck?

BUTAGA: Wait until I earn my three orders.

KOLYA: You've already got three.

BUTAGA: These? (*Removes crosses.*) No-o. I'll heel my boots with these.

KOLYA (*wincing*): The shorts were blue, Vasya.

BUTAGA: Pink.

(ANNA GRIGOREVNA *appears, carrying food and drink.*)

ANNA GRIGOREVNA: Have a bite, my dears. These mushrooms are home-prepared. I gather them in my wanderings through the woods. And everyone praises my cider.

TIMOFEI: Some little scout we have, eh? Sometimes a mushroom, sometimes a German. Knows the difference, too. She's thinking of getting married soon.

ANNA GRIGOREVNA: Oh, get along with you. Vasya, rest a little, lie down, son.

BUTAGA: I could carry five men a hundred miles, the way I feel now.

ANNA GRIGOREVNA (*serving* ANDREI): This is the way I understand things, Andrei. The German's cunning. His spies spied out everything they could: where we have troops, where our factories are located; in general, how the better to strike at us. Well, they reported to Hitler, "You can begin now." He began. But what his spies didn't learn, and didn't report, is how much stamina the Russian people have. We can take it, and more, my son. We went through much worse in the Civil War. First, we'll stand it, then we'll stretch ourselves, and then we'll strike back so that the earth will tremble and shake. Do I understand correctly, Andrusha!

ANDREI: Correctly, Annushka.

TIMOFEI: That's just another of her jobs—self-appointed agitator. Holds conversations with the collective farmers. Not bad; they praise the old woman.

(MAMONTOV *dressed for the road enters, followed by JEREN and two orderlies.*)

MAMONTOV: Metaphysics! I'm evacuating the field hospital. (*To orderlies.*) Take the wounded man. (*Approaches KOLYA.*) You're in luck, young man. You're leaving with us.

KOLYA: But, mother? Is she here also?

MAMONTOV: Your mother? Oh, yes. She's still in the city, Nikolai. I haven't time even to be surprised at seeing you here. Such a time we're living in, old man. Apparently we're abandoning the city. (*To TIMOFEI.*) The order has been given to blow up the factory.

TIMOFEI: My factory?

MAMONTOV: Yours, Timosha!

KOLYA (*calling from the stretcher*): Good-bye, friends. I'll soon be with you again, soon!

(ANDREI, BUTAGA *say good-bye to him.*)

MAMONTOV (*to* VERA): And you . . . You've made up your mind to stay?

VERA: I'm staying, Dad.

MAMONTOV: A guerrilla doctor. Fine, fine. (*Attempts to conceal his emotions.*) Let's change the subject for the sake of clarity, eh, Jeren? Take care of her . . . Jeren . . . She might catch cold—have lot of bother with her.

JEREN: You'll soon be together again, I know.

MAMONTOV (*stroking JEREN's hair*): Good girl, good girl. (*Caresses VERA.*) Yes, couldn't even detach a tendon. No, I won't say good-bye. Jeren is right. We'll see each other again. (*Quickly, jerkily embraces VERA. Then cries loudly to group standing around KOLYA.*) That's enough, enough. You're not separating for a year. We'll place him on his feet in no time, and ship him off to you again. (*The orderlies carry KOLYA out; BUTAGA, VERA, ANDREI, JEREN follow.*)

MAMONTOV: Why so quiet! Timosha!

TIMOFEI: Eh, Zachar. I myself laid the dynamite in the foundry. A week ago, just in case the German came. But I really didn't believe that it'd be necessary. My life, my blood is in the factory. Last year we installed new ovens, such ovens! Ah, Zachar, and now it's the end. (*Lowers his head into his hands.*)

MAMONTOV: I understand, Timofei . . . (*Impatient honking of horn sounds.*) Time's up. They're in a hurry. (*Embraces him.*) We'll soon meet again! Anna, feed the guerrilla well! When I come back, I'll take reckoning. (*Leaves. In the distance, dull explosions are heard.*)

TIMOFEI (*jumping up*): They've begun! Look, Annushka!

(*Black smoke appears on horizon.*)

ANNA GRIGOREVNA (*crossing herself*): It was necessary, Timosha.

TIMOFEI: Eh, Explode! Burn! Blow up! So the Germans shan't have you! Bury all the scoundrels under you! Tear them to pieces . . . We built you, now we destroy you, and again we'll build you, when the hour comes.

ANNA GRIGOREVNA: And better than before, Timofei. Ours are workers' hands.

TIMOFEI (*making profound obeisance to ground*): Farewell, forgive us.

(*ANDREI and JEREN enter.*)

JEREN: Sofia Pavlovna is also wounded. Zachar Zacharovitch asked

me to tell you after Kolya left. But not seriously. She'll live. We all will live, Andrei.

ANDREI: Sofia Pavlovna . . . "Mtsyri" . . . "The Confessional" . . . here on the terrace.

JEREN: Exactly a month ago. Today, a month ago the war began.

ANDREI: The first month. And how many of these months will there be?

JEREN: It doesn't matter how many of them there'll be. Anyway, we're on the eve of victory!

ANDREI: Yes. On the eve. (*Pauses. Beyond the wall BUTAGA and VERA sing softly. GETASHVILI runs in.*)

GETASHVILI: Germans have appeared from the direction of the hillock. Their number is up to a battalion. They're concentrating on the highway, moving toward the bridge. Our troops haven't shown up. (*Rushes to machine gun.*)

ANDREI: You'll have time for that. Call Butaga. (*GETASHVILI runs out.*) On the bridge? The bottles. Well, Father, the tank bottles, hurry.

TIMOFEI (*reaching for the bottles under the terrace*): Here.

ANDREI (*handing bottle to JEREN*): Burn the wheat! It's hot and dry. The wind is in their direction—they'll have to turn to the left . . . and then we'll hold them.

JEREN: Burn the wheat? Andrei!

ANDREI (*harshly*): I never repeat my commands twice!

JEREN: I'm going. (*Leaves. BUTAGA, VERA, GETASHVILI already group around ANDREI.*)

ANDREI: Vera, Anna Grigorevna, run to the guerrillas. Have them take positions in Snakes Canyon, and not open fire until we do. Hurry.

VERA: We're off. (*Leaves with ANNA GRIGOREVNA.*)

ANDREI (*looking over those who remain*): We'll take the Germans on ourselves. Shoot carefully. Don't hurry. We'll hold out to the last man.

BUTAGA: That is, to the last German, Comrade Commander.

ANDREI: Exactly. (*Indicates splintered birch tree.*) Getashvili, climb up and report. (*GETASHVILI clambers up birch, looks through field glasses. The others take positions ordered by ANDREI.*)

ANDREI: What do you see, Sandro?

GETASHVILI: The dust of German boots. I see smoke, flames. The field is burning! The wheat. Oh-h, it's burning furiously now, Katso. Even the heavens are hot. The air in front of my eyes shimmers. Ah-h! They've noticed. They're turning aside. Toward us . . .

(The puff-puff of motorcycles is heard. All turn to gaze at gap in wall. IVAN enters, accompanied by group of Commanders and Signal Corps men. They carry roll of cable, unwind it, and begin to establish communication lines. Red Army men run by in woods. They drag along machine guns, then set them up.)

IVAN: Aha, someone's got ahead of us. Whose commanding point is this?

(ANDREI approaches. IVAN recognizes him, but at that moment GETASHVILI cries out from the tree.)

GETASHVILI: What's that? What's that? *(Rubs his eyes and looks again through field glasses.)* Andrusha! Tanks! Tanks are going into action . . . they're coming out of the earth . . . our tanks. But they weren't there before, Katso. *(Glances down, sees IVAN, starts, nearly falling out of tree.)*

IVAN: Sit stronger, young man. You're up there, so continue. *(To one of his Commanders.)* Put up camouflage corps for awards. *(To GETASHVILI.)* Well, what do you see?

GETASHVILI: Ha-a! *(Comes to himself and speaks in official tones.)* Comrade Major-General, to the left of the hillock our tanks are driving the Germans toward the wheat.

ANDREI: It's already burning, Comrade Major-General.

IVAN: Good work! *(To Commander.)* Signal Corps! I've been here more than five minutes, and not one Signal Corps man! Quick! *(Commander moves aside to cable lines and speaks through telephone.)*

GETASHVILI: Ha-a-a! Into the fire with them, into the fire! They're encircled.

IVAN: Where's the infantry?

COMMANDER: They're following the tanks.

GETASHVILI: They're burning! Comrade Major-General! They're burning. They're waving their hands.

IVAN: So. We've finished that lot. Now for the important thing. (*Goes to table where maps have been spread out. The Commanders step aside. Signal Corps men enter with reports.*)

ANDREI (*to BUTAGA*): Run to the guerrillas. Cancel the command. And try to find Jeren. Where is she? Why doesn't she come? (*BUTAGA leaves.*)

TIMOFEI: It's difficult to believe that he's my son.

COMMANDER (*taking dispatch and reporting to IVAN*): The Germans are in the city.

IVAN: They're welcome. (*To one of his Commanders.*) Begin encirclement. We'll break into their rear, at least up as far as Ovchinovo. Seize the highway, and hold it until the cavalry arrives. And communication, communication! I'm personally at the wire, is that clear?

COMMANDER: That's clear, Comrade Major-General.

IVAN (*embraces Commander*): While the Germans are in the city, gnaw at their back! Quick wits. Swiftmess. Valor. And I'll not let them get out of here. Go. (*Commander leaves.*)

IVAN (*reading new report*): That's good. Blow up the bridge!

TIMOFEI (*with gesture of hand*): Blow it up from the roots!

IVAN: Bombers into action. Tanks on the left edge. Artillery begin. That's all for the moment. (*Moves toward terrace, filling his pipe.*) What? You're sorry about the city? Bridge? You'll get used to it. (*To GETASHVILI, who is still sitting in tree.*) Don't build nests up there. Climb down. (*To his father.*) We'll build you another factory, father, when we beat the Germans . . . (*Pause.*) Sofia was carried off, before I had a chance to see her. . . . (*Dull explosion.*) The bridge!

(*VERA runs in, followed by ANNA GRIGOREVNA and BUTAGA. He is carrying JEREN.*)

VERA (*in a whisper*): Andrei . . . (*ANDREI sees . . . rises.*) They surrounded her. Five of them with a machine gun. We saw it, ran to help. She shot two of them, and then fell.

(*BUTAGA carefully places JEREN on the terrace steps. ANDREI raises her head.*)

ANDREI: Jeren. Do you hear me? Jeren. . . .

JEREN (*without opening eyes*): The wheat is burning. We'll all live,

Andrusha. I know. We're on the eve . . . Darling . . . I'm all right.
(Dies.)

(In the ensuing silence, the ever-growing sound of the bombers is heard.)

GETASHVILI: Sister. . . .

IVAN: Yes, sister . . . *(Straightens up and speaks, looks directly ahead.)* We swear to you, sister, to avenge your death. To avenge the burned villages and cities, the land trampled by German boots, to avenge the tears and sorrows of our people. All, all will be avenged. We solemnly swear at your death to scorn death and know no mercy in battle. We swear to kill pity in us, and as fiercely hate the enemy as we love life and our country. We shall avenge blood for blood, and deaths for death, and terrible shall be our revenge. We swear!

ALL: We swear!

(Drone of bombers changes into powerful symphony of battle.)

CURTAIN

SMOKE OF THE FATHERLAND

A Play in Seven Scenes

By THE TUR BROTHERS AND L. SHEININ

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN

By ABRAHAM FEINBERG



THE TUR BROTHERS AND LEO SHEININ

The two brothers, Leonid Davidovich Tur (born 1905) and Peter Davidovich Tur (born 1907), were brought up in Leningrad where they became facile and versatile playwrights, collaborating with other authors in various combinations of two, three, or four, to produce a long series of interesting plays.

Peter Tur collaborated with Yakov Gorev and Andrei Stein in three plays: Oil (1930), a play concerning workers in the oil wells at Baku; Utopia (1931), a drama about the building and launching of a ship called Utopia symbolizing the Soviet Union; and Seven Waves (1935), a story of imprisoned criminals.

Peter Tur collaborated with his brother Leonid in Earth and Sky (1932), a play about an astronomer in an observatory near the border who becomes involved in the intrigues of those plotting a foreign invasion; and in The Unequal Marriage (1941), an unimportant comedy acted at the Satire Theatre in Moscow.

Both brothers collaborated with Joseph Leonidovich Prut, a well known writer of military plays, in The Eastern Battalion (1935), produced at the Red Army Theatre in Moscow and dealing with the difficulties of a foreign legion made up of various nationalities.

Finally the two Tur brothers entered into collaboration with Leo Romanovich Sheinin (born in 1905, the son of a forester). His legal investigations as a coroner in murder cases had been useful to him in writing detective stories and were now helpful in the construction of plots for plays. From this very fruitful collaboration came a number of exciting plays: The Simple Affair (1936); The Confrontation (1938), acted in New York in 1939 under the title The Showdown and dealing with the arrest of Fascist spies who try to operate in the Soviet Union; The Consul General (1939), about a Soviet diplomat in Europe and his struggle against Russian émigrés who hope to regain their estates through a Fascist victory; Smoke of the Fatherland (1942), printed here and dealing with a former Russian landowner who marches in with the German armies but is disappointed in his hope of regaining his land; The Extraordinary Law (1943); and The Duel (1944).

H. W. L. D.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

STEPHEN KASATKIN, Chairman of the Vyazovka District Executive Committee

ANTONINA IVANOVNA KOROMYSLOVA, his wife, a schoolteacher, known as NASTYA to the Germans

PAVLIK, their nine-year-old son

CORNELIUS ZYBIN, the cashier of the local bank

JEREMIAH ADAMICH LISOVSKY, the bookkeeper of the local bank

TIKHON SHCHUSS, a collective farmer

NATALYA SKITNEVA, a sturdy collective-farm woman

AGAFYA KORKINA, an old peasant woman

RASPASHONKOV, Chief of the local Militia

STEPHEN KLEVTSOV, fourteen-year-old collective-farm boy, grandson of Efim

EFIM KLEVTSOV, an elderly peasant

YEGOR (Old Man in Peaked Cap), a peasant

AFANASY KUCHERENKO (Man in the Cap), a prisoner from the local jail

PETYA ZABUDKO, a prisoner from the local jail

SOLOMON BORISOVICH SHAPIRO, doctor from the local hospital

1st Red Army man

2nd Red Army man

VOLODYA ZHIKHAREV, son of former Russian landowner, Senior Lieutenant in German Army

MAJOR KRASCHKE, German Army officer

COLONEL VON GERLACH, German Army officer

MAJOR YAKUTOVICH, Red Army officer

SENIOR LIEUTENANT PROKOSHIN, Commander of Reconnaissance Platoon of the Red Army

AIDE-DE-CAMP DRATVIN, Red Army officer

TSIBULIN, Chief of Staff to Yakutovich

NIKITIN, correspondent of the Soviet newspaper *Izvestia*

TELEPHONE OPERATOR, Red Army man

Red Army men ZAGORUIKO, KRASULIN, RYABTSEV

BRUNO WOLF, German cameraman

TWO GERMAN SOLDIERS

GUERRILLA SENTRY

Red Army men, peasants, German soldiers, Soviet prisoner from local jail

Time of Action, 1941, during the German invasion of Russia.

Place of Action: Scene 1—Office of the District Executive Committee of Vyazovka. Scene 2—Agricultural College at Vyazovka. Scene 3—Headquarters of the Partisan Detachment in Damp Ravine. Scene 4—Headquarters of German Detachment. Scene 5—With the Partisans in Damp Ravine. Scene 6—Command Post of Yakutovich's Regiment. Scene 7—Large Hall in the Landowner's House at Vyazovka.

SMOKE OF THE FATHERLAND

SCENE ONE

Office of the Chairman of the District Executive Committee in the village of Vyazovka. The stage is plunged in darkness, only rarely illuminated by the flames of a distant conflagration and the intermittent flashes of gunfire. The dull reverberation of a cannonade is heard.

As the eye grows accustomed to the murk, the outline of window frames and the silhouettes of people can be discerned against the background of the glowing sky.

KASATKIN (*in the darkness*): The devils! . . . It looks as if they have destroyed the power station. . . . Just to think of all the sweat and effort we put into it. . . . See how it burns! . . . Lissovsky, where's the lamp? (LISOVSKY *lights a kerosene lamp. The stage is illuminated by its yellow flame, revealing KASATKIN, the Chairman of the District Executive Committee, his wife, ANTONINA IVANOVNA, a schoolteacher, PAVLIK, his nine-year-old son, ZYBIN, the cashier, and LISOVSKY, the bookkeeper.*) Hand over the list of deputies, Lissovsky! (*He takes the list, lights it at the lamp and throws it into the stove.*) That's that! . . . Now the list of public workers. (*He throws this list into the stove.*) Good! . . . Now the inventory of national property . . . the list of chairmen of village soviets . . . and now let us have Maxim Gorky . . .

LISOVSKY (*taking a portrait of Gorky from the wall*): What's the idea, Stephen? He is a writer, they won't touch him.

KASATKIN: Oh, won't they? We had better burn it ourselves. (*Throws the portrait into the stove. TIKHON SHCHUSS enters—a tall collective farmer, with a rifle hung across his back. He is carrying the signboard of his collective farm.*)

SHCHUSS: Here you are, Chairman. This is our collective farm signboard.

KASATKIN: Hand it over. (*Reads.*) "Peaceful Labor Collective

Farm." . . . (*Throws it into the fire.*) The time for peaceful labor is over . . . What's the news, Shchuss?

SHCHUSS: Everything O.K. We drove off all the cattle yesterday. All the grain's been sent to the station, except three cartloads of food, which we have sent to Damp Ravine. The carts for the collective farmers are standing ready in the wood, near the road. But one or two of the women are giving trouble. . . . They refuse to leave, and you can't talk them out of it. . . . There's Natalya Skitneva, for example. (*He points to a woman standing in the doorway.*)

NATALYA: I won't go! . . . Don't try to persuade me. I'm not a goat to be driven off. . . .

SHCHUSS: There you are, Chairman. That's the sort of ignorant woman . . .

KASATKIN (*fuming at NATALYA*): What's this, you root of evil? Do you want to remain here under the Germans? You would like to be washing the Nazis' dirty linen, would you? You are sorry to leave your hut, your jars of cream, your flower pots in the window? Is that it?

NATALYA: I won't go, and that's all there is to it!

KASATKIN: You are disobeying the order to evacuate . . .

NATALYA: I refuse to go with the children and the cripples. . . . I drive a plough . . . I have worked in the smithy. . . . My brother was killed by the Germans. . . . I want to go with your detachment, Comrade Kasatkin.

KASATKIN: So that's it! . . . You are made of the right stuff, I see. . . . Very well, we'll take you. I suppose we can find some use for you. (*To SHCHUSS.*) Now, Tikhon, put the ploughs through the wheat, tear it all up by the roots. . . . Arrange the tractors in column and let them go through the fields straight towards the east.

WOMAN (*standing at back of stage*): No, you won't! I won't allow you to trample down the crops! I will lie down under the tractors. . . . Let them crush me first. . . . Do you hear, Chairman!

KASATKIN: Who's that?

WOMAN: Agafya Korkina, from the Dawn of Socialism Collective Farm . . .

KASATKIN: No, not from the dawn of socialism, but from the darkness of the pit. . . . So you want the Germans to build up muscle on your grain, eh? . . . Have you any sons?

AGAFYA: Two of them: They have both been called to the army.

KASATKIN: And use that muscle to kill your sons. Is that what you want?

AGAFYA: I have been living on the land for nearly sixty years . . . I can't lift my hand against the corn. . . . It's all the same to me who sits here in this office—you or the Germans. . . . I'm nobody here. My place is on the land . . .

KASATKIN: So it's all the same to you! Then stay here and cling to your corn. . . . But bear in mind, when we come back and again nail the sign of the "Dawn of Socialism" to the apple-tree there will be no place for you among us, honest men and women. . . . Your own sons will spit in your face . . . Well, get out of here, quick! . . .

SHCHUSS: Well, run away, run away to your barn! . . . (*Exit AGAFYA.*) Don't worry, Chairman; the Germans won't get far on her bushel or two. . . . Our women are leaving themselves only just enough for the children, and even that they are burying in the ground. . . . All the Germans will get in Vyazovka will be scorched stumps and trampled ears. . . . They'll have no water for their horses. . . . They won't find a single apple in the orchards, ripe or unripe.

KASATKIN (*shaking him by the hand*): Thanks, Shchuss. . . . When we come back our land will be a hundred times more fertile. . . . It will grow fat and rich from the enemy's vile blood and decayed corpses . . . better than manure. . . . Well, comrades, are you ready? (*Turns to ZYBIN.*) Will you be through with your figuring soon, Zybin?

ZYBIN (*turning over his papers with a deft finger*): Total: eleven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven rubles . . . Comrade Lysovsky, take this down . . . (*Dictates.*) This is to certify that at the time of the compulsory evacuation from the district center of Vyazovka on the eleventh of this month at two P.M. the Vyazovka Branch of the State Bank had cash in its tills totalling eleven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven rubles in paper money . . . (*With annoy-*

ance.) What are you doing? Don't you know the amount should be written in words, Lissovsky? . . . "Signed, Zybin, Cashier." . . . Yes, I'll sign. (*Signs.*) Now we need witnesses. . . . You sign, Kasatkin, and (*turns to the CHIEF OF MILITIA*) you too, Raspashonkov . . .

KASATKIN: What do you want witnesses for at a time like this? Listen to the guns! A shell may hit us at any minute and blow cashier and witnesses too to smithereens.

ZYBIN: I can't stand that music myself. I wasn't brought up to have guns fired at me . . . (*He starts as a shell bursts close by.*) Every shot gives me a pain in the liver. But this is government money. Everything has got to be in order. (*KASATKIN and RASPASHONKOV sign.*) ZYBIN *ties the money up into a package, heats a piece of sealing wax at the lamp, and seals the package.*)

KASATKIN: Well, that's all. You can go now, Zybin. And you too, Antonina. . . . Look, Pavlik is half asleep. Shchuss will be waiting for you with the cart. (*He embraces her and kisses his son on the head.*)

ANTONINA: There's still time, Steve . . . (*Quietly.*) Let me stay with you.

ZYBIN: No, it's not all. We have forgotten to count the silver. (*Counts, starting at every explosion.*) What a draught! All the windows are smashed. Draughts are the death of me.

KASATKIN: You will go on counting until the Germans come, and they will count every rib in your body. . . . They won't sign a certificate either . . . (*Two RED ARMY MEN enter carrying a wounded GERMAN OFFICER—KRASHKE. They lay him on the floor.*)

RED ARMY MAN: Here's an officer we captured. . . . He must be a major judging by his insignia. The regimental commissar said he's an important bird. . . . Only it's a pity he is dying . . . A doctor's necessary . . . that major would be very useful to us . . .

OFFICER (*groaning*): Marichen . . . Mein Liebling . . . Conrades, bitte, helfen . . .

ANTONINA: He's asking for help.

OFFICER: Yes, yes, help. . . . Ich werde alles erzählen . . . alles was ich weiss . . .

ANTONINA: He promises to tell everything . . . everything he knows.

RED ARMY MAN: We need a doctor. . . . The regimental commissar asked particularly . . .

KASATKIN: Where are you going to get a doctor from? Our Solomon Borisovich probably left already. . . . Maybe there is still a nurse at the hospital. (*He lifts the telephone receiver.*) Hallo! Connect me with the hospital. . . . Who's that speaking—Dr. Shapiro? You haven't left yet? . . . Solomon Borisovich, do come over here to the district executive office as fast as you can with your instruments. It's very important. The life of a (*pauses*)—of a comrade is at stake . . . (*Two men enter in caps and reefer jackets.*)

MAN IN THE CAP: Is this the Central Executive Committee? Who's the boss here?

KASATKIN: I'm the Chairman of the Central Executive Committee. What do you want?

MAN IN THE CAP: You're the man we want. You see we are prisoners . . . from the jail, you know . . .

KASATKIN: Run away, eh!

MAN IN THE CAP: No, no, nothing like that . . . only a slight mishap. You see, a shell burst near the jail and blew down the walls. Every man Jack of the guard killed. So we suddenly found ourselves at liberty, so to speak. Not of our own free will, of course, but there you are. We have been looking for a whole hour for somebody to report to. . . . We have come here in full force. The boys are waiting outside. They selected us as their spokesmen.

KASATKIN: Well, funny things do happen in life! . . . What am I going to do with you? But here is the Chief of Militia. (*Points to RASPASHONKOV.*) This is his business. Let him decide what to do with you.

MAN IN THE CAP (*to RASPASHONKOV*): Comrade Chief of Militia, allow me to report. We have arrived in full force; no one has run away. Only one man has lagged behind; he rubbed a blister on his foot. I don't doubt but he will be here soon, because he has not been sentenced for counterrevolution, but for disorderly conduct, under Article 74 of the Criminal Code . . .

RASPASHONKOV: Why, here's a regular lawyer . . . quoting the criminal code.

MAN IN THE CAP: What are your instructions? Where shall we go to be locked up?

RASPASHONKOV: Listen, old fellow. Do you know the road to Kovalsk? Well, you march off there, with the whole circus. Wait a minute, I'll give you a note. (*Writes. WOUNDED MAN groans. Noise of the cannonade is heard. ZYBIN counts the silver. The MAN IN THE CAP, having received the note, stands about shuffling his feet.*)

RASPASHONKOV: Well, what are you waiting for? Off with you!

MAN IN THE CAP: Aren't you going to give us a convoy?

RASPASHONKOV: A convoy! Just listen to this fine gentleman, he wants a convoy. . . . No, you just toddle along all by yourselves. You are not babies, you don't need a nurse. Go as you came, the whole circus together.

MAN IN THE CAP: All right, that suits us. (*Goes.*)

RASPASHONKOV (*calling after him*): Say, what's your name?

MAN IN THE CAP: Afanasy Kucherenko, sentenced under Article 162, Clause C.

RASPASHONKOV: Well, you see that the men behave themselves, otherwise you will be held responsible after the war. And tell the chief of the jail at Kovalsk to send me a telegram. . . . (*Ponders for a minute.*) True, I haven't got a regular address just now . . . temporary domicile, so to speak, with the guerrillas . . . Well, run along! (*Exit MAN IN THE CAP and his companion.*)

KASATKIN: Well, well, funny things do happen in life, Antonina. It was only a couple of days ago that you came here, and now we have to part again. We didn't get much time together. . . . Where do you intend to go to, back to Kovalsk, or further?

ANTONINA: It's all the same to me, Steve, whether it's Kovalsk or further. . . . It will be no life without you, anyway . . . perhaps you will let us stay with you?

KASATKIN: Oh, no, Tony! . . . This is not the life for a woman with a child . . .

ANTONINA: You are afraid we will be a burden to you?

KASATKIN: No, no, not a burden, but a constant anxiety. I shall be worrying about you all the time. I would carry you on my back if it were possible. . . . No, you had better go to Kovalsk. . . . We will meet again. . . . We shall have a happy life yet . . .

ANTONINA: It will be no life for me. I want to stay with you. (*Weeps.*)

PAVLIK: Take us, Papa. We want to go with you.

KASATKIN (*lifting up the boy*): No, Son, you have got to go to school. We shall be together again; don't worry. Now, see that you catch up with your arithmetic. (ANTONINA *sobs.*) Pull yourself together, Tony. You are a teacher; you know German; you will be useful in the rear. Children have to be taught, even though it's wartime. . . . Especially German; it will come in useful in Berlin. (ANTONINA *turns away. A pause.*) The scoundrels, what a mess they have made of our lives! Never mind, we'll make them pay for everything—for our power station, and for our separation. . . .

ZYBIN (*accurately pouring the silver into a pillowcase and continuing in his former monotone*): Write, Lissevsky. "Total: one thousand and twenty-five rubles in silver and thirty-seven kopecks in copper. . . ." Again you're writing the sum in figures! I told you distinctly, it won't do . . .

(DR. SOLOMON BORISOVICH SHAPIRO *enters, carrying an instrument case and followed by a nurse.*)

SHAPIRO: How do you do, Comrade Kasatkin! Where's the sick man . . . I mean, the wounded man? I am always forgetting that there are no sick people nowadays, only wounded. It doesn't sound scientific to say so, but sickness seems to disappear in wartime.

ZYBIN: I wouldn't say so. No war will ever rid me of my heartburn.

KASATKIN: I thought you had left already, Solomon Borisovich. Be sure to evacuate today, or else it will be too late . . .

SHAPIRO: Now, don't say that! How can I leave! I have two operations down for today: one, a peritonitis; the other, a wound in the stomach. Both of them young commanders. If I leave they will simply die. I can't think of leaving. Where is the wounded man?

KASATKIN: There he is.

SHAPIRO: What sort of bird is this?

KASATKIN: Oh, he's a very important bird. His life has got to be saved. He might give some very valuable information. (SHAPIRO *slips into his white smock, examines the WOUNDED OFFICER, and shakes his head.*)

SHAPIRO: He is in a bad way. There is a danger of septic poisoning. What is needed is an immediate blood transfusion.

KASATKIN: Do everything you can for him. The regimental commissar is very anxious to save him.

SHAPIRO: But where am I to get the blood from? We used up our last stock yesterday. We need some fresh blood, or else the issue is bound to be fatal.

WOUNDED OFFICER (*groaning softly*): Retten Sie mich! . . . Save me! . . .

KASATKIN: Well, there's nothing for it, I shall have to give him my own. . . . Funny things do happen in life! Fancy giving my blood to a Fascist! . . . But it seems to be very important that this black-guard shouldn't peg out . . .

SHAPIRO: There is no call for you to do that, Comrade Kasatkin. You have plenty of worries without that one, I should imagine. . . . Well, if the Red Command needs that beggar so badly, I will let him have half a tumbler of my own blood, the devil take him. (To the NURSE.) Have him carried into the corner and lay him on the table . . . Have you brought everything we need? (To ANTONINA.) You know German, I think; you teach it in our school? Tell him my name's Shapiro. Is the Herr Offizier willing to pollute his Aryan blood with the blood of a miserable Jew? Perhaps he is not. Well, let him say so. . . . I will not insist.

WOUNDED OFFICER (*shaking his head. He evidently understands the drift of what is being said*): Gut, gut . . . I am willing . . . Ich bin einverstanden . . . Aber schneller . . .

ANTONINA: He agrees to everything . . . He only begs you to make haste. (The wounded man is carried into the corner and laid on the table. Enter SHCHUSS.)

SHCHUSS: Comrade Chairman, I have to report that all the men have

left except Nikita Rebrov who is too ill to move. Where do they assemble?

KASATKIN: Beyond Damp Ravine. There they will be met by an escort. Do you know the password? (*Whispers in his ear.*) How many men are left?

SHCHUSS: About fifteen in all. Their total age amounts to about two thousand years. Every one of them is either stone-deaf or half blind. One of them says he remembers Napoleon. There is Gusarov, the Veshnyev brothers, Efim Klevtsov . . .

KASATKIN: Did you say Klevtsov? I hope he is reliable. They say he used to be a lackey to the local landlord . . . (*The firing draws nearer. The telephone rings.*)

KASATKIN (*taking up the receiver*): Yes, Comrade Yakutovich. We are leaving right away. . . . (*Hangs up the receiver.*) The regimental commander says we must leave in a hurry. German tanks have broken through. Well, Tony, go along with Shchuss now. . . . Shchuss, put the schoolmistress in the cart with the women going to Kovalsk . . .

ANTONINA: I won't go . . .

KASATKIN: Antonina, Tony, have you gone out of your senses?

ANTONINA: I can speak German. I am going to stay. Nobody knows me here in Vyazovka. I shall be of use, you will see . . .

KASATKIN: I categorically forbid it. Comrade Koromyslova . . . I order you to evacuate . . . (*He suddenly breaks off and is lost in reflection.*) Well, stay. Perhaps you are right. But what about Pavlik? What are you going to do with him?

ANTONINA: I shall put him out with Granny Martha in the village. I have already spoken to her about it and she is quite willing. (*She takes her leave.*)

SHAPIRO: Well, the operation is over. It looks as if the ruffian is going to live after all. (*Rifle shots are heard, and bullets hit the window. There is a sound of shattering glass.*)

KASATKIN: Let's go, comrades! Raspashonkov, Solomon Borisovich, Zybin! (*ZYBIN slings the pillowcase full of silver onto his back, bending under its weight.*) Are you mad, Zybin . . . What are you doing with that sack?

ZYBIN: Who is going to render account in the regional center, I would like to know? They have got a bookkeeper there who is a regular savage—he will simply tear my head off if . . .

KASATKIN: You are likely to have your head torn off by the Germans first. . . . Leave that sack here! I will answer for it . . .

ZYBIN: Very well, if you will answer for it. We will draw up a certificate to that effect later. (*He shuts up the sack of silver in the safe. They all make for the door. At this moment a YOUNG MAN enters, limping, wearing one boot and carrying the other in his hand.*)

YOUNG MAN: Phew! It was all I could do to make it. Who is the big man here? Say, did our fellows go by this way?

KASATKIN: And who are your fellows?

YOUNG MAN: Why, the guys looking for a prison . . .

KASATKIN: Yes, they were here. They all went to Kovalsk in a bunch . . .

YOUNG MAN: Kovalsk? How am I going to catch up with them with this game leg of mine . . . I have been walking barefoot since the morning. . . . My foot is just one big blister. . . . And where are you off to, citizens?

KASATKIN: To a wedding. Can't you see? And who may you be?

RASPASHONKOV: A very well known individual—Petka Zabudko. He is the disgrace of my district and the cause of my gray hairs.

ZABUDKO: How d'you—I didn't recognize you, Comrade Chief of Militia.

KASATKIN: We are going into the woods, young fellow. We'll be sleeping in the marshes with only the stars to cover us.

ZABUDKO: You don't say you are going to be guerrillas? Chief—I say, Chief, let me go with you!

KASATKIN: It can't be done, you are no good. A man needs clean hands for this job.

ZABUDKO: But I'm not a counterrevolutionary! I'm not a thief! My only offence was smashing windows in the club while in a state of intoxication . . .

RASPASHONKOV: And breaking the furniture. . . .

ZABUDKO: Only two chairs—you don't call that furniture! Take

me along, Chief. I'll make amends. . . . You won't be sorry for it.

KASATKIN: Well, all right. We'll see when we get there. (*They make for the door.*) But wait. Raspashonkov, what are we going to do with the officer? Funny things do happen in life! It looks as if we shall have to take him along with us. A fine business. . . . We shall have all our work cut out getting away safe ourselves, and here we must save a Fascist . . .

LISOVSKY: Comrade Kasatkin, allow me to stay with him . . . When our troops leave, I will turn him over to them. . . . I will catch you up . . .

KASATKIN (*peering into LISOVSKY's face*): Aren't you afraid? You may not be able to get away in time . . .

LISOVSKY: What have I got to be afraid of? If the worst comes to the worst, I can put a bullet into his head and my own . . . I am no longer young . . . the best of my life is over.

KASATKIN (*shaking his hand*): To tell the truth, Lissovsky, I didn't expect this of you . . . Well, good-bye . . . (*All leave, except LISOVSKY. Only the groaning and muttering of the wounded man are heard.*)

LISOVSKY (*listening in terror to the cannonade*): I'll be killed! Sure as fate! Lord, how my knees tremble! . . . Oh, Jeremiah, you were born out of your time . . .

OFFICER: Heiss . . . Wasser . . . water . . . (*ZYBIN returns as the thunder of the guns draws closer and takes a small packet out of his desk.*)

LISOVSKY: Did you forget something?

ZYBIN: Yes, my bicarbonate of soda. For my heartburn, you know. (*Exit. OFFICER groans.*)

LISOVSKY (*pouring out some water*): Right away, sir . . . Here you are . . . (*To himself.*) Marvelous are your ways, O Lord! . . . No, it's a good thing I didn't go with them. . . . I am not a Communist; I am no big bug . . . I am just a plain ordinary bookkeeper. What can they have against me? A bookkeeper will be useful even to the Germans . . . I'll start in business on my own. . . . There is no sense in counting other people's money all your life. . . . Perhaps there

will be happy days for me too under their rule . . . (*Heavy firing outside the window. The German command, "Vorwärts! . . . Feuer!" is heard distinctly and voices draw closer and closer. A voice cries: "Surrender, Russians!"*)

OFFICER (*rising on his elbow, and listening with a look of gladness on his face*): Our troops . . . unsere Truppen . . . (*To LISOVSKY.*) What are you doing here, Russ?

LISOVSKY: I am a friend, Herr Offizier . . . a friend. (*He opens the window and waves the lamp into the darkness.*) This way, this way, soldiers! There are friends here. (*A middle-aged officer, wearing gold pince-nez, and with a revolver in his hand, enters.*)

OFFICER: Who was that called? Hands up!

LISOVSKY (*raising his hands*): It was I. . . . Allow me to lower my hands, your highness . . .

OFFICER: You want to shoot, you swine?

LISOVSKY: I want to cross myself, your highness . . . from gladness . . .

OFFICER: Who are you?

LISOVSKY: The local bookkeeper . . . I have suffered under the soviets . . . I was in exile for two years . . .

OFFICER: What for, on account of politics?

LISOVSKY: Exactly, sir. I was storekeeper in one of their co-operatives and was tried and sentenced owing to shortage of goods, so to speak. It was a dog's life under them, your highness . . .

OFFICER: Well, cross yourself! (*LISOVSKY lowers his hands and crosses himself. The OFFICER does the same with the hand holding the revolver.*) Well, thanks be to God that he has brought his humble servant back to his native heath. . . . (*Leans out of the window and commands.*) Soldaten, bestimmen hier die Wache . . . Spaller!

CURTAIN

SCENE TWO

A lawn in front of the former squire's mansion in Vyazovka. It has the usual columns and terrace of the houses of the rural nobility. To the side, a signboard lies on the ground, apparently just torn from the house. It bears the inscription, "Vyazovka Agricultural College." Before the house are assembled all the inhabitants still remaining in the village; old men, women and a few children. Among them are KLEVTSOV, AGAFYA, and LISSOVSKY.

LISSOVSKY (*ingratiatingly*): Now then, muzhiks, see that you give him a right good welcome . . . With all the honors. . . Hats off and a deep bow from the waist. . . Although I suppose you have already forgotten how to bow. . . I am saying this all for your own good, mind you. . . The Germans are not to be joked with . . .

OLD MAN IN PEAKED CAP: Ay, it's the truth, we have forgotten how to bow. There was nobody to bow to, unless you wanted to bow to yourself.

AGAFYA: Never mind, Granddad, we will learn over again. Bowing doesn't hurt you.

OLD MAN: That's where you're wrong, woman. Old backbones creak. When you are not used to bowing, they won't bend even with a weight on them . . .

LISSOVSKY: Never mind; you will be left with a sound head anyhow. . . (*He notices a movement on the terrace.*) Hats off! . . . (*The peasants reluctantly remove their caps. The officer with the gold pince-nez of the first scene appears on the terrace, together with the wounded major, who now walks on crutches.*)

LISSOVSKY: Here they are, your honor; I collected them as you told me . . .

OFFICER: Very few, very few. . . Where are the rest?

LISSOVSKY: They have gone off into the forest in their ignorance. Some of them have run away . . .

OFFICER: Tut, tut! (*Wipes his pince-nez.*) Muzhiks, I have had you assembled here to tell you that I am your master. My late father, Pavel

Ignatievich Zhikharev, owned this house and this land. By right of inheritance this land now belongs to me. Henceforward you will obey me and the German Army. The old regime of chaos and abuse is over. Order will be established. Is that clear? (*Silence.*) I ask you, is that clear?

LISOVSKY: Quite clear. (*To the muzhiks.*) Isn't that so?

AGAFYA: Of course it's clear, as clear as crystal. He said there will be order.

OLD MAN: That's clear as far as it goes. But I would like to ask a question. May I?

ZHIKHAREV: Naturally. . . . The Bolsheviks treated you as if you were soulless images, but the German army is only too glad to talk to the Russian people. Well, what do you want to ask?

OLD MAN: About the land . . .

ZHIKHAREV: What about the land?

OLD MAN: Well, whom is it going to belong to? (*Pulls a document out of his cap.*) In this here leaflet which your airplane dropped the other day it says that the land would belong to the peasants . . .

ZHIKHAREV: I have already told you that this land is mine. It has been in the Zhikharev family for ages. My grandfather and great-grandfather owned it. Is that clear, old man?

AGAFYA: But I don't understand . . . this land was assigned to us in perpetuity, that is, forever . . .

ZHIKHAREV (*ironically*): Who assigned it to you?

AGAFYA: Why, everybody knows that: the government, of course.

ZHIKHAREV: Which government?

AGAFYA: Why, the Soviet government. Who else?

ZHIKHAREV: So you thought that the Soviet government was also perpetual, did you? And where is it now, this Soviet government of yours? Do you know, woman?

AGAFYA: In Moscow, of course.

ZHIKHAREV: Moscow is already in the hands of the German troops. The Soviet government has fled to the steppes of Turkestan, to the Sarts and Samoyeds. Man proposes and God disposes, as the saying

goes. . . . You have forgotten God, muzhiks . . . that's the trouble with you. You have at least got a priest, I hope?

OLD MAN: Yes, we have.

ZHIKHAREV: And a church?

OLD MAN: Yes, we have a church. There is only one left for four villages. Special prayers were held in it the other day. Only old folks, of course. The young people nowadays are not great churchgoers.

ZHIKHAREV: What were the prayers for?

OLD MAN: What could they be for? For victory, of course.

ZHIKHAREV: Victory for our troops, how touching . . .

OLD MAN: Eh? . . . Yes, of course— No, for the Red Army—

ZHIKHAREV: How's that? For the Red Army? So that's what you are driving at! . . .

OLD MAN: Eh? . . . What's that? . . . I don't hear very well, your excellency, may God grant you good health . . .

LISOVSKY: Don't listen to him, your honor . . . He is a little queer . . . and hard of hearing . . .

KRASHKE: Not altogether . . .

ZHIKHAREV: Well, then, muzhiks, to come back to the land. So we understand one another, don't we? . . . Those who had allotments will of course get them back.

AGAFYA: Allotments? What allotments were there in Vyazovka? You could cover them with a handkerchief, they were so tiny. . . . What's more, we have forgotten where the boundaries were . . .

ZHIKHAREV: There will be no difficulty about that. Those who want to, may work for me.

OLD MAN: What about those who don't want to?

KRASHKE (*stepping in front of ZHIKHAREV*): They will be shot. And you will be the first one, old man. Now, listen, muzhiks; you and your master, Senior Lieutenant Zhikharev of the German Army, have reached full clarity and mutual understanding. The German Command welcomes such cordial relations between the peasants and their lawful masters. Now let us see whether you and I cannot establish equally cordial relations. I represent the German government. I want

you to tell me: Who trampled down the crops? (*Silence.*) I ask you again: Who trampled down the crops? (*Silence.*)

LISOVSKY: It wasn't those who are here.

KRASHKE: Well, now all of you get off at once to gather in the harvest; or, rather, what is left of the harvest, thanks to your benightedness. Get along now!

OLD MAN: Allow me, your excellency, to ask one more question.

KRASHKE: What is it now?

OLD MAN: The point is, your grace, the peasants are complaining: The soldiers are very wild . . . Can't they be held in a bit?

KRASHKE: Wild? What do you mean by wild?

LISOVSKY (*interposing*): He doesn't mean anything by it . . . He's a little queer, as I say.

OLD MAN: They go from house to house and snatch everything they can lay hands on . . .

KRASHKE: German soldiers don't snatch; they requisition. A receipt is given for everything; for every head of cattle they take. What more do you want? The German Army is your liberator. You should be grateful to your liberator.

OLD MAN: Fine liberators . . . They are liberating us of our property . . .

KRASHKE: Soldaten, nimmt diese alten Esel. Erschiessen hier sofort! Shoot him here on the spot! At once! (*SOLDIERS seize the OLD MAN.*)

OLD MAN (*taking off his cap and bowing to the people*): Farewell, collective farmers. . . . Remember well of me. . . . When our troops return, let them take revenge for old Yegor. . . . And let them demand a receipt, in proper form. (*SOLDIERS drag him away.*)

SOMEONE IN THE CROWD (*in scarcely audible tones*): Farewell, Yegor . . .

OLD MAN (*to ZHIKHAREV*): So long, your grace . . . I have a feeling we will meet again soon . . . (*Some of the women sob. Old men wipe away tears with the backs of their hands. YEGOR is led behind a house. Two shots are heard.*)

KRASHKE: That will be the fate of everyone who allows his tongue to wag foolishly. You may go! (*Peasants turn away in silence.*)

ZHIKHAREV: Eine Minute, Herr Major . . . Muzhiks, is there a man among you by the name of (*glances at a notebook*)—by the name of Efim Klevtsov and Agafya Korkina?

AGAFYA: I am Agafya. (*The old men buzz like a swarm of bees. One of them steps forward. He is tall, with brown awkward hands and a brown bald patch on his head covered by a fluffy down.*)

ZHIKHAREV (*to the peasants*): You may go. (*To KLEVTSOV.*) You stay!

(*The peasants make for the gate, headed by LISOVSKY.*)

LISOVSKY (*softly, to the peasants*): I am sorry for Yegor, although he had only himself to blame. You saw how I tried to save him? I would like you to remember that, collective farmers. And the way I stood up for you when he started talking about the crops. You all trampled them down . . . there's no concealing the fact. But I am not going against the village. I am heart and soul with the people. So please bear in mind, collective farmers, if the time should ever come . . .

ZHIKHAREV: Don't you remember me, Agafya? I am Volodya, the son of Pavel Ignatievich, the owner of these lands. . . . My old father died . . .

AGAFYA (*diplomatically*): Peace be to his soul . . . (*Crosses herself.*)

ZHIKHAREV: Don't you recognize me?

AGAFYA: I sort of remember you now . . . but you were so little then . . .

ZHIKHAREV: And you were very young too . . . Why, you used to be my nurse, one might say, when you worked in our kitchen.

AGAFYA: That's true . . . I did work in the kitchen.

ZHIKHAREV: I remember how you used to carry me around in your arms . . . and ride me on your shoulders. (*Shows signs of emotion.*) Do you remember my sister Varya? She will be here soon . . . back to her native place . . . What a pity they have cut down the copse! . . . And I see the pond is gone . . .

KRASHKE: Less reminiscence, Herr Oberleutnant! Sentimentality is the curse of the Russians.

ZHIKHAREV: Well, now, you will work for me as you used to work for my father. Do you agree?

AGAFYA: Well, I suppose I must if I am told to.

ZHIKHAREV: You may go. (*To KRASHKE, pointing to her as she retreats.*) That's a loyal soul . . . She is slavishly devoted to our family . . . Her grandfather was already in the service of my ancestors. . . . When my father was dying in Paris he told me to be sure, if ever I got back home, to our native place, to look up Agafya.

KRASHKE: Slavic sentimentality again—my pond! my muzhiks! . . . Herr Oberleutnant, it's time to have the table laid. The Colonel may be here any minute now.

ZHIKHAREV (*opening the house door*): Hi! Are there any women there? (*ANTONINA appears with a rag and broom.*) Well, how's the cleaning going?

ANTONINA: Finishing now, sir.

ZHIKHAREV: What a state they have reduced the house to! Just imagine, turning it into an agricultural college! My former nursery is full of retorts and test tubes. . . . It is hardly recognizable.

KRASHKE: What a fine girl! . . . What's your name?

ANTONINA: Nastya.

ZHIKHAREV: Well, listen, Nastya. Will you lay the table for dinner? Can you find a tablecloth, plates, dishes . . . ?

ANTONINA: Certainly, sir. It will be done right away. (*Exit. COLONEL enters, accompanied by an adjutant. KRASHKE and ZHIKHAREV rise to their feet.*)

COLONEL: Be seated, gentlemen. Well, how are things going?

KRASHKE: Everything is shaping nicely, sir. Order is being restored. The peasants were overjoyed at the return of their master.

ZHIKHAREV: That is a fact, sir. It was a touching scene. (*ANTONINA enters with tablecloth and dishes and begins to lay the table.*)

COLONEL: Now listen, gentlemen. . . . Orders have just been received from the Command to continue the offensive on the seventeenth. Major Schmidt's tank column will proceed by the old bridge and the lower road (*pulls out a map and indicates the route*) towards the town of Kovalsk . . . It will be followed by a company of motor-

cyclists. (*Enter LISOVSKY. He starts at the sight of ANTONINA. She also turns pale. But they pass each other without betraying recognition.*)

LISOVSKY (*bowing*): Mr. Zhikharev, I have to report that the people have gone to work. But there is nothing to do the harvesting with . . .

ZHIKHAREV: How's that?

LISOVSKY: All the reaping machines have been broken.

ZHIKHAREV: Let them reap with scythes, the dogs, as they used to do in my father's time.

LISOVSKY: Very well, sir.

ZHIKHAREV: You may go.

(*Exit LISOVSKY. ANTONINA follows him down the steps on to the lawn. The officers sit bent over the map.*)

ANTONINA (*to LISOVSKY*): What are you doing here, Jeremiah Adamich?

LISOVSKY: I couldn't get away in time, Comrade Koromyslova . . . Don't think I am up to anything wrong. . . . I am heart and soul with you, with the Soviet government, you know . . . My word of honor, I just couldn't get away in time. . . . What's more, I am already an old man. Where can I go to? . . .

ANTONINA: Well, you just listen to me, Jeremiah Adamich. My name is not Koromyslova and it's not Antonina. I am Nastya. Do you understand?

LISOVSKY: Very well. It's no business of mine.

ANTONINA: If you betray me . . .

LISOVSKY (*trembling*): No, no, no! . . . It would never enter my head even to . . .

ANTONINA: Well, remember, one superfluous word and it's all up with you. I may die, but it will be the end of you. Our fellows will see that I am revenged.

LISOVSKY: I know nothing about you, Nastya. I have never clapped eyes on you before.

ANTONINA: That will be the best thing, both for you and for me. (*Exit.*)

LISOVSKY (*gazing after her*): Oh, Lord! There's no peace from them, the accursed ones, even with the Germans here . . . What a

devil of a woman! . . . Betray her? . . . or—not to betray her? . . . At least not for the present . . . God forbid, they may return yet . . . (*Two soldiers enter leading DOCTOR SHAPIRO and a barefooted lad of about fourteen. The soldiers salute and come stiffly to attention before the officers bent over the map.*)

KRASHKE: Stand at ease! What is the matter?

FIRST SOLDIER: We have captured a doctor, a Jew, Herr Major.

KRASHKE: Shoot him!

SHAPIRO: Herr Offizier . . . don't you recognize me? . . . I am the doctor . . . Shapiro . . .

KRASHKE: Stop talking nonsense, you dog of a Jew! I have never seen you before. (*To the SOLDIERS.*) Lead him away!

SHAPIRO: Take a good look at me, Herr Offizier. My blood flows in your veins. (*KRASHKE pulls out his revolver and fires. SHAPIRO falls.*)

KRASHKE: Take him away! (*The soldiers drag away SHAPIRO's corpse.*)

COLONEL (*continuing to eat his fried eggs*): What was that he cried?

KRASHKE (*glancing at ZHIKHAREV*): Oh, it was nothing . . . some driveling nonsense . . .

COLONEL (*to the second soldier*): And what sort of animal is that? What has he been up to?

SOLDIER: We caught him driving cattle in an easterly direction, Herr Colonel.

COLONEL: Were there many cattle?

SOLDIER: Not very many, Herr Colonel. Only one goat. When we tried to detain him he took to his heels and began throwing stones at us . . .

ZHIKHAREV: Permit me to talk to the Russian boy, Herr Colonel. (*Exit SOLDIERS.*) Sit down, youngster. Here is a piece of cake. (*The BOY takes the cake but does not eat it.*) Don't be afraid—who are you?

BOY: The cowherd of the collective farm.

ZHIKHAREV: What is your name?

BOY: Stephen.

ZHIKHAREV: Well, listen to me, Stephen. The German soldiers are

very kind. They never do any harm to children. Tell me, why did you drive off the goat?

Boy: My dad told me to.

ZHIKHAREV: And where is your dad?

Boy: With all the others . . .

ZHIKHAREV: And where is that . . .

Boy: Everybody knows that—with the guerrillas of course.

ZHIKHAREV: Well, Stephen, your father had no call to turn against us; the Germans only want to be kind to the Russian peasants. Eat your cake. How much did they pay you in the collective farm?

Boy: Two hundred workdays a year and fifty rubles in money a month.

ZHIKHAREV: Well, now we will pay you twice as much. . . . Do you know that your old master has returned to the village?

Boy: Yes, I heard . . . the collective farmers were talking about it.

ZHIKHAREV: And what do they say about their master?

Boy: They say he is a sort of lackey to the Germans. (KRASHKE *smothers a laugh.*)

COLONEL: What does he say?

ZHIKHAREV (*glancing at KRASHKE*): Oh, nothing special. He's just talking nonsense. Well, Stephen, we will pay you more and more every year, so that in ten years' time—

Boy: In ten years' time I won't be a cowherd.

ZHIKHAREV: What will you be?

Boy: A doctor. I shall go and study at the medical institute. The schoolmistress lends me books.

ZHIKHAREV: A doctor! (*Excitedly.*) You see, Herr Colonel, what the bolsheviks have done to my unhappy people. You will never be a doctor, you son of a bitch! Never! (*Strikes him.*)

CURTAIN

SCENE THREE

Headquarters of the guerrilla detachment in Damp Ravine. A sentry stands in front of the commander's dugout. Near-by burns a small camp-fire, with a caldron hanging over it. A machine gun is seen on its stand, and piled-up cases of ammunition. To the right may be seen the backboard of a truck with an inscription in German on it. Near the dugout stand KASATKIN and RASPASHONKOV. ZYBIN is lying on the ground covered with an overcoat. NATALYA SKITNEVA is reporting something to KASATKIN. She looks smart in a military uniform, and one is not surprised to see a rifle slung across her broad shoulders and hand grenades hanging from her belt.

KASATKIN: Well, speak up, Comrade Skitneva. Did you get through to Yakutovich?

NATALYA: No, Comrade Kasatkin. It's impossible to get through. There are Germans all around. . . . I was nearly caught three times. . . . I tried to get through by way of the marsh, but they had patrols there . . . I spent two hours lying in the water, breathing through the rushes.

KASATKIN: Very well. Go and get some rest. (NATALYA goes to the corner of the room) That's a brave woman! To think I nearly forced a scout like that to leave for Kovalsk.

RASPASHONKOV (*quietly*): It looks as if we are being surrounded. It's six days since a scout has got through from Yakutovich either . . .

KASATKIN (*reflectively*): Wait a bit . . . perhaps Shchuss has got through . . . or Zabudko . . . I sent them out in three directions . . . one of them is bound to get there.

RASPASHONKOV: If they don't get through, all the worse . . . our supply of cartridges is coming to an end. . . . Besides Yakutovich—we've no other means of getting fresh supplies.

KASATKIN: Yakutovich will let us have them . . . if only we could get in touch with him.

ZYBIN (*groaning*): Oh-h-h!

KASATKIN: What's wrong, Cornelius? Heartburn again?

ZYBIN: My insides are simply on fire. The doctor ordered me to diet . . . I am not allowed to eat coarse food . . .

KASATKIN: And how is the liver?

ZYBIN: I wouldn't mind the liver so much. It's the lumbago that's torturing me. I just can't unbend my back. This cursed ravine is full of draughts, and draughts are the death of me . . .

KASATKIN: I warned you, Cornelius, to evacuate to Kovalsk. This is not the life for a man in your state of health.

ZYBIN: As soon as it eases up a bit, I will certainly go off to Kovalsk. What I need is a diet . . . (*Sighs.*) But how am I going to face the chief bookkeeper there, with all the silver left behind? Believe me, Stephen, I am always seeing that chief bookkeeper in my dreams, with his thick heavy mustache and short bristling hair. And he's always threatening to take proceedings against me. . . . Oh-h-h! (*Dissolves some bicarbonate in a glass of water.*) This is the last pinch of soda I have left. What I am going to do without it, I don't know . . . (*The crunching of a boot is heard and SHCHUSS appears out of the darkness.*)

KASATKIN: Is that you, Shchuss?

SHCHUSS: Yes.

KASATKIN: Well?

SHCHUSS: I got as far as Steep Woods. I spent the night there. But couldn't get a step farther. There are patrols everywhere. The devils have surrounded us, it seems. I was detained twice, but played the idiot and they let me go . . .

KASATKIN: Did you hear anything?

SHCHUSS: There is heavy fighting going on there . . . It must be Yakutovich putting up a stand. . . . So, Stephen, I failed to carry out your orders. Simply wasted shoe leather. True, in Lebyazhye I played hell with some of their fuel-tank cars.

KASATKIN: How many?

SHCHUSS: Seven. They must have been intended for refueling their tanks. I drove holes into them with an auger. You should see the gasoline running out, in such nice smooth streams; it did my heart good. . . . The Vyazovka women asked me whether I was milking cows. They thought it a fine joke, but they helped me.

KASATKIN: You didn't make any noise, I hope?

SHCHUSS: No. We dispatched the guard without a sound. We were as quiet as mice. . . . And you know what else? Back of Glubokoye I came across a telephone wire. I thought of cutting it, but then changed my mind.

KASATKIN: You have got the head of a statesman, I see. You are thinking of tapping it, are you?

SHCHUSS: That's the idea. It would be good to hear what the Germans have to say. Could you let me have a roll of telephone wire?

KASATKIN: Raspashonkov, let him have a roll of wire. But be careful, Shchuss; they have sentries all around, you know.

SHCHUSS: If I fail to tap it, I'll cut it, have no fear.

KASATKIN: It's not that. See that you take care of yourself.

SHCHUSS: Don't worry; I am not tired of life. . . . It's not long since I got married, you know.

(Exit SHCHUSS. Voice is heard singing, "All my life, dear, I will remember you.")

RASPASHONKOV: There he is, howling again. . . . How many times I have had him up for rowdiness! And I will remember you all my life, too, dear Citizen Zabudko . . .

KASATKIN: I can't make out why you have got it in for him-so. He is not a bad lad. Only a bit rowdy . . .

RASPASHONKOV: Rowdy! Why, he is just savage. I was almost demoted last year on account of him. . . . They have heard about him even in the regional center. And you should have seen what he did last spring! He broke into a department store. Just took the door off its hinges and went to sleep in a bed in the window . . . A crowd gathered in the morning and there he was peacefully sleeping behind the glass. He is incorrigible.

KASATKIN: He has to be handled properly, Raspashonkov. Nobody has really tried to influence him. He is just chock-full of energy and irrepressible spirits. I wouldn't exchange him for one of your quiet dreamy ones. And as to his being rather rowdy at times, we will take him in hand, rest assured . . . *(Enter ZABUDKO.)*

ZABUDKO: Allow me to report, something that'll make you snort . . .

KASATKIN: Listen, Comrade Zabudko, you leave that rhyming and

punning for the girls. You are not at a party, you know. Is that the way to stand?

ZABUDKO (*coming to attention*): I beg your pardon, Comrade Commander. I don't do it from cussedness; it's just a habit. Talking in rhyme just comes natural to me. I find it easier. But if it must be ended, then least said soonest mended . . .

RASPASHONKOV: There you are, what did I tell you!

ZABUDKO: That's our old militia chief, I had better look out or I'll come to grief . . .

KASATKIN (*quietly, but impressively*): Now, look here, Zabudko, drop that! This is not the time or place for fooling. If you don't drop it, my Count of Monte Cristo, you will have to turn in your arms and say good-bye to the detachment . . .

ZABUDKO: Honest to goodness, I won't do it again.

KASATKIN: Now let's hear what you have to report.

ZABUDKO: There's no getting through to Yakutovich. It's hopeless.

KASATKIN: How far did you get?

ZABUDKO: As far as the Germans' headquarters.

KASATKIN: Is that so? What did you see?

ZABUDKO: They have brought up seven new tanks to the bridge. There are fifteen guns beyond the waterworks—regimental caliber. I didn't notice those guns at first. Then I took a peep into their kitchen.

KASATKIN: What do they give them to eat?

ZABUDKO: The biscuit the soldiers get is as hard as a brick. But they have slaughtered a pig for the caldron. (*To NATALYA.*) I think it was yours, Natalya . . . the piebald one . . .

NATALYA: My piebald hog! My Yashka! May he choke them, the devils! May he give them the colic for the rest of their lives!

ZABUDKO: He made a fine rich soup. My mouth fairly watered. . . . I hadn't eaten a thing all day, you know . . . I wanted to give the cook one over the head and get a taste of that soup. But I remembered the way you went for me last time, Comrade Commander . . .

KASATKIN: I should say so. It would have been crazy; you might have given us all away. . . . Just fancy wanting to steal the meat out of the Germans' soup . . .

ZABUDKO: Why, the meat belonged to our collective farmers. . . . There's another thing, Comrade Commander; you have no idea what a fine accordion I saw among those Germans. All inlaid with mother-of-pearl, with black and white keys.

KASATKIN: Must have been a beauty.

ZABUDKO (*mournfully*): You know, I had an accordion myself once. It was a fine piece of work, made in Tula. I was the best accordion player in our district, let me tell you.

RASPASHONKOV: Yes, and he staggered all over the place with it, rousing the whole neighborhood.

ZABUDKO: Last year I won first place at the district accordion contest. But when they learned about my police record they wouldn't give me the prize.

KASATKIN: Where is your accordion now?

RASPASHONKOV: Pawned it, no doubt, and got drunk on it.

ZABUDKO: No, you are wrong there. It was taken away from me under unfair circumstances . . .

KASATKIN: How was that?

ZABUDKO: Last year I was arrested in Gorokhovka for disorderly conduct. The chief of militia there kept staring at my accordion for two hours on end like a cat at a bird. And then he said to me brazenly: "I shall have to confiscate that accordion under the law as material evidence." And he did. And the skunk had the insolence to play on it all night. I could hear every sound in the cell. The tears just streamed down my face as I listened.

KASATKIN: Why, was he such a good player?

ZABUDKO: It wasn't that. I cried from sheer vexation, because he had taken away my accordion. (*A pause.*)

NATALYA: Dinner's getting cold, minstrel. You must be starved.

ZABUDKO: I haven't reported everything yet, Comrade Commander. I have brought a tongue.

KASATKIN: Why didn't you say so before? Where is he?

ZABUDKO: He won't run away. I have got him tied up to a tree in the ravine until further orders. Shall I fetch him?

KASATKIN: Good lad! Bring him here. But bandage his eyes first.

ZABUDKO (*rhyming*): Sure! I'll tie them so tight, he'll think it's black as night.

KASATKIN: Zabudko! . . .

ZABUDKO: Sorry!

KASATKIN: How did you catch him?

ZABUDKO: Oh, I was quite gentle with him. I climbed up a pine tree and dropped on him. He had an automatic rifle. Here it is.

KASATKIN: Did he resist? Did he make much noise?

ZABUDKO: He didn't get a chance. He just squeaked once, and I stuffed his mouth full of pine kernels. I had to give him a clip over the ear, just to keep him in order. (*To RASPASHONKOV.*) I hope you won't go reporting that, Comrade Captain of militia, or else they are sure to find some other clause under which to indict me . . .

RASPASHONKOV: If a clause is to be found for everything you do there wouldn't be enough in the law books . . .

ZABUDKO: After that he calmed down and went along as quietly as a lamb. We walked hand-in-hand, like a newly married couple. He's not a bad German. He kept muttering, "Kamerad, Kamerad." I said to him, just out of politeness, "Don't be uneasy, Kamerad. I am taking you to a good place."

KASATKIN: Well, bring him here.

ZABUDKO: Right away! (*Exit.*)

KASATKIN (*staring after him*): We will make a man of him yet. Believe me, Raspashonkov; he will be doing big things yet . . .

RASPASHONKOV (*ironically*): That's just what I am afraid of. He will be doing such big things that you and I will be sorry for it . . . Well, it looks as if we are in a bad way, Stephen. The Germans seem to have walled us off completely from Yakutovich.

KASATKIN: This is war, and any wall can be broken down in war-time.

RASPASHONKOV: You can't break it by running your head against it.

KASATKIN: No, but you can break it by using your head. Anyway, we have got to get in touch with Yakutovich at all costs. Otherwise, we shall be strangled here like kittens.

SENTRY (*approaching KASATKIN*): Comrade Commander, your wife, Antonina, is asking for you.

KASATKIN: Let her pass. (*Enter ANTONINA.*) Tony!

ANTONINA: Stephen! (*She starts to embrace him, but restrains herself.*) How do you do, comrades? (*RASPASHONKOV, ZYBIN, NATALYA and the rest gather around her.*)

RASPASHONKOV: Well, how are things in Vyazovka?

ANTONINA: Terrible. The Germans are raging like fiends. . . . They have taken every scrap of bread they can find . . . The whole village is groaning and wailing. . . . The women are weeping and lamenting . . .

KASATKIN: Is it true that the old landlord has returned?

ANTONINA: Yes.

KASATKIN: Funny things do happen in life . . . Fancy having a landlord in Vyazovka!

ANTONINA: What is funnier still is that I am his housemaid. I look after the German colonel.

KASATKIN (*anxiously*): Take care, Antonina. If you are recognized they will tear you to pieces . . . limb from limb . . .

ANTONINA: Lissovsky is there.

KASATKIN: What is he doing?

ANTONINA: He fawns on the Germans like a dog . . .

KASATKIN: The scoundrel! The traitor!

ANTONINA: He is just a skunk. He has the heart of a rabbit. He is trying to save his skin.

KASATKIN: He didn't betray you?

ANTONINA: He hasn't so far, and I don't think he will. I put the fear of God in his heart.

KASATKIN: It is a dangerous game. It is like playing hide and seek with death.

ANTONINA: That's an exaggeration, Stephen. On the other hand, I might be of use to you. You know, they talk freely in front of me without the least concealment. Yesterday the colonel told the major that an offensive against Kovalsk has been appointed for the 17th at dawn. . . . The tanks will proceed by way of the old bridge. . . .

They will be followed by motorcycles, and the offensive will be supported by aircraft . . .

KASATKIN: Thanks, Tony . . . That is very valuable information. (*Reflects.*) He is a scoundrel, that Lissovsky. Never mind, we shall remember it when the time comes. . . . We won't forget any of these Lissovskys. They have thrown off the mask a little too prematurely, thinking that the end of the Soviet regime has already come. Let them! . . . Let them sow panic, let them spread filthy rumors and sneer and wipe their hands in glee and wait for our downfall. . . . They are cowards and traitors. . . . They abandon their posts at the first sign of danger. . . . They scurry like rats into their holes, shivering for their skins and ready to go down on their knees and lick the Germans' boots. Let us keep the reckoning of these Lissovskys, Comrades. Let us remember well their faces, and names, their dirty tricks and the masks they wear. We shall demand account for every false smile, for every act of treachery, for every friend betrayed and done to death, for every child tortured on account of them. And when the time comes to hit back, Comrades, let them have the first bullet. Let the first blow be struck at them! (*Enter ZABUDKO with the PRISONER.*)

ZABUDKO: Comrade Commander, here's the guest.

PRISONER: Ich bin nicht Offizier. . . . Ich bin ein Soldat . . . ein Bauer.

KASATKIN: Look how he is trembling! Tell him, Tony, that he has nothing to fear. . . . But let him tell us everything he knows . . . (*ANTONINA speaks to the PRISONER in German. He brightens up at once and replies.*)

ANTONINA: He belongs to the 322nd Tank Regiment. He says he will hide nothing, and begs that we should not shoot him. He says that tanks have been brought up to the bridge and he believes that an offensive is in course of preparation.

KASATKIN: When is it planned for? (*ANTONINA speaks to the PRISONER.*)

ANTONINA: He doesn't know for sure, but he thinks for tomorrow morning.

KASATKIN: That chimes in with your information, Tony. (*To the*

SENTRY.) Take the prisoner away. (*To the GUERRILLAS.*) Comrades, I need two volunteers. It is an important job, and I warn you, a very dangerous one. Now, then, who is willing to go?

RASPASHONKOV: Let me go, Comrade Kasatkin, I am tired of sitting around here.

KASATKIN: That won't do. You are the Chief of Staff, you can't go off on jobs like this . . .

RASPASHONKOV: Let me go this once . . . just to shake off the cobwebs and stretch my limbs a bit . . .

ZABUDKO (*rhyming*): What about little Zabudko? Don't forget that he would go . . .

KASATKIN (*severely*): Now, Petya, I warn you! . . .

ZABUDKO: I am just itching to go on a big job, Comrade Commander. Something with Hell and thunder in it. I want to live and die like a hero and have songs made in my name. . . . But there is that police record of mine . . . I hope that won't stand in the way, will it?

ZYBIN: Don't overlook me, Stephen.

KASATKIN: This is no job for you, Cornelius. You are a sick man. Think of your liver.

ZYBIN: It has just let up a bit, thank God . . . Let me go . . . Respect the wishes of an old man.

KASATKIN: Very well. You and Petya may go together. His hot head needs a sober one like yours to restrain it. But before giving you your instructions I want to ask you, as a comrade: Are you prepared to face death without flinching? . . . Don't hesitate to speak. If you are not prepared for it, say so frankly. You are not military men, you know . . .

ZYBIN: There is only one thing I can't do . . . I can't bayonet a man . . . I don't like blood, that is, the sight of blood. Before the war, if I pricked my finger I would go into a faint. . . . As for the rest, I am ready for anything. This is wartime . . .

ZABUDKO: Oh, I am not squeamish about blood. The sight of it sometimes makes me feel happy.

KASATKIN: Well, then, Comrades, listen. The Nazis are about to

start an offensive against Kovalsk. Your duty is to blow up the bridge across the Vyazovka over which the tanks are supposed to pass. Here are three bundles of explosives and two fuses. One of the fuses lasts a minute. You will have time to creep away before the explosion comes. The other fuse is only for three seconds. If you use that one you will have practically no chance to get away. You will be blown up together with the bridge. It is to be used only in an emergency, if you should happen to be detected. Is that clear?

ZABUDKO: Quite clear.

ZYBIN: Double-entry bookkeeping, so to speak.

KASATKIN: Exactly. But if you have to die, then die to good purpose. To the sound of music! At least three tanks for each of your lives. Make the Germans remember to the end of their days how a Russian, a Bolshevik, lays down his life . . .

ZYBIN: That's the sort of balance I like.

KASATKIN: But if either of you doesn't feel quite up to the job, say so frankly. There is nothing dishonorable about it.

ZABUDKO: If you don't send me I'll drown myself. It will mean that you don't trust me.

ZYBIN: The way I feel about it is this . . . This is wartime . . . So hand over the explosives. . . . There is only one thing I regret . . . I shall be almost within reach of the money I left behind . . . within a few paces of the executive committee offices.

KASATKIN: Well, thanks, boys. Now go and lie down for an hour or so in the dugout. (*Embraces ZABUDKO and ZYBIN. They go out. KASATKIN is left alone with ANTONINA. The campfire dies down. A pause.*) Well, how is Pavlik?

ANTONINA: The other night I went to the old woman's house. I crept up to the window and peeped in . . . I even heard him breathing . . .

KASATKIN: Well, how was he?

ANTONINA: He was asleep and breathing quite evenly. I so wanted to go in and give him at least one little kiss. But I was afraid of being seen . . . (*She suddenly seizes KASATKIN by the arm, as a man comes creeping across the stage.*)

MAN (*speaking with difficulty*): Comrade Commander, your orders have been carried out. I have tapped the wire.

KASATKIN (*peering at him*): Shchuss? What's the matter with you? Are you wounded?

SHCHUSS: It looks like it . . . Here's the wire. I have dragged it all the way from Glubokoye.

KASATKIN: Dragged it in that wounded condition! . . . Natalya! Bandages! Quick! Thanks, Shchuss . . . Thanks, old man . . . Ras-pashonkov, bring the headphone! (*NATALYA comes running in with bandages and begins to dress SHCHUSS' wound.*)

KASATKIN (*attaching the phone to the wire*): Here, Tony, listen in!

ANTONINA (*listening*): Take it down: Major Krashke's tank company is to advance his machines from initial positions to the old bridge at 11 A.M. prompt . . .

CURTAIN

SCENE FOUR

Headquarters of the German camp near Vyazovka. Several tents are seen, surrounded by tanks. The river gleams not far off. The end of a bridge across a river can be seen with a sentry standing guard. It is a warm summer's night. The low notes of an accordion are heard and the hum of a traveling power plant. The flap of ZHIKHAREV's tent is raised. The interior is illuminated. ZHIKHAREV is operating a typewriter. Enter KLEVTSOV with a bucket of water.

ZHIKHAREV (*finishing typing*): That's all, I think. (*Stands up and stretches himself.*) I'll take a wash now, Efim.

KLEVTSOV: Very well, your honor.

ZHIKHAREV (*taking off his tunic, pulling out a small bag hanging around his neck, and showing it to KLEVTSOV*): Do you see this bag, Efim? There is a bit of Vyazovka land in it. I have been wearing it for twenty-three years. . . . My father gave it to me on the steamer

as we were leaving Russia. . . . "Wear this handful of our native soil, Vladimir," he said, "it will save you from enemy bullets . . ."

KLEVTSOV: And did it?

ZHIKHAREV: It did. I fought in Spain, and I survived. I fought in Belgium and France, and came through safe and sound.

KLEVTSOV: And you will be quite safe at home, of course.

ZHIKHAREV: "And when you get back home again," the old man said, "swallow a pinch of it and pray, and then scatter the rest over the fields."

KLEVTSOV: And have you carried out your father's command, your honor?

ZHIKHAREV: I have had no time yet. But I can do it right now. . . . Hand me a knife. (*Takes the bag from his neck, cuts it open, crosses himself, puts a pinch of the earth into his mouth, and then begins to spit furiously.*) Phew! What vile stuff! It's so bitter . . .

KLEVTSOV: Would you like some water?

ZHIKHAREV: What a disgusting taste! Give me a drink, quick . . . (*Drinks.*) Well, now pour the water over my hands. How clumsy you are, you are pouring it all over me . . .

KLEVTSOV: Forgive me, master, I am an old man now . . .

ZHIKHAREV: You don't try, you have no zeal . . . Look at the way you cleaned my boots today. They looked all right at first, but when you take a closer look, you find they have just been scamped. You didn't put your heart into it. My father used to say that you could judge how faithful a servant was by the way your shoes shined. A gentleman's boots should have such a gloss that if you breathe on them a mist should run over them like a mirror. That's the way they should be polished.

KLEVTSOV: My hands have lost their strength now . . . And the polish is bad stuff . . .

ZHIKHAREV: It's not the polish. It's the muzhik, who is not what he used to be, Efim. . . . No, the muzhik has been spoiled. . . . You, for instance. You seem to be doing everything as you should; you give no cause for complaint, and yet it isn't as it should be. You don't seem to put your heart into it.

KLEVTSOV: I do my best, your honor.

ZHIKHAREV: No, the muzhik is not what he used to be. Look at your fellow-villagers . . . they have all taken to the woods . . . and we don't get a moment's peace from them.

KLEVTSOV: That's because of their ignorance, sir; they are a stupid people. . . . Your honor, allow me to put in a word for my grandson . . .

ZHIKHAREV: Which grandson?

KLEVTSOV: Young Stephen. . . . Your soldiers have arrested him. It was at your orders . . .

ZHIKHAREV: What for? I don't seem to remember any grandson . . .

KLEVTSOV: He was the collective farm's cowherd . . . He was driving away a goat. . . . It was just out of ignorance, sir; he is still a foolish young lad . . .

ZHIKHAREV: Oh, that freckled, impudent youngster. . . . No, I cannot do anything about it, Efim, so don't ask me to. The penalty for driving off cattle is death by shooting, irrespective of age. Here is a special order to that effect from the Command. No, I can't do anything about it.

KLEVTSOV (*falling on his knees*): I beg you for the love of God, your honor, save young Steve!

ZHIKHAREV: You can't expect the German Command to rescind its orders on account of your Steve. (*Enter MAJOR KRASHKE.*)

KRASHKE: Has the order been translated? Let me hear how it sounds in Russian.

ZHIKHAREV (*reading*): "Order No. 16. Responsibility of Minors. Many peasant children have been caught driving off cattle and committing various acts of aggression against German troops. Warning is hereby given that children convicted of the aforementioned crimes and misdemeanors will be shot just like adults. Warning is also given that for every crime committed by Russian guerrillas against the German Army their children remaining in the village of Vyazovka will be shot. The German Command hopes that these measures will bring their unreasonable fathers to their senses. Signed: Colonel von Gerlach."

KRASHKE: That sounds all right. It is the only way to treat these people.

ZHIKHAREV: Quite right, Herr Major. (*Enter ANTONINA.*)

ANTONINA (*to ZHIKHAREV*): Shall I set up your cot, sir?

KRASHKE: Another thing . . . By the way, does your housemaid understand German?

ZHIKHAREV: Not a word.

KRASHKE: In punishment for that affair with the fuel-tank cars, have the son of the Bolshevik commissar Kasatkin and of a certain Koromyslova, a schoolteacher, arrested. . . . The young Bolshevik bastard will be shot tomorrow morning on the green in the presence of the villagers.

ANTONINA (*mastering her emotions*): Shall I beat up the pillows?

ZHIKHAREV: There's no need. Go and make the bed in the colonel's tent.

(*ANTONINA goes out. As she enters the COLONEL'S tent she is seen to sway and fall.*)

KRASHKE (*going to the window of the tent*): What a night, gentlemen! What a moon! On a night like this one would like to be drinking coffee in the bosom of one's family in a country villa instead of fighting . . . My funny little Mitzi must have grown up to be quite a big girl while her father has been away . . .

ZHIKHAREV: You seem to be an excellent family man, Herr Major? (*Enter COLONEL VON GERLACH.*)

KRASHKE: Everybody says that I am a tender father, and it is the truth, gentlemen. When I think of my Amelia and my little house in Innsbruck the tears come into my eyes . . .

GERLACH: Never mind, gentlemen, it won't be long before we shall be drinking coffee and kissing our youngsters' fat cheeks . . . The offensive begins today at dawn.

ZHIKHAREV: Another few days, and we shall be in St. Petersburg . . . the Nevsky Prospect . . . the Neva . . . the Brass Horseman. . . . (*Quotes.*) "Sweet and pleasant is the smoke of the fatherland." . . . It would be interesting to know in what condition our house on the Sergievskaya is. . . . I have been told it has been turned into some

sort of club . . . You know we have two houses in St. Petersburg . . .

KRASHKE: And I have three . . .

ZHIKHAREV: You are joking, Herr Major . . . What do you mean?

KRASHKE: Just what I say. (*Pulls out his pocketbook.*) Here are the deeds. When Herr von Ribbentrop went to Moscow to conclude the treaty, I said to myself, "Oho, it is time to prepare for a Russian campaign." . . . Soon a lucky chance presented itself. Some fool of a Russian émigré I met in a café offered me the deeds of three large houses and his shares in the Putilov Works. I bought them for a hundred marks. Heavens, how I long to see my four-storied house on the Nevsky Prospect, No. 44! (*Telephone rings. He picks up the receiver.*) This is Major Krashke. Is that the General? Yes, sir, I am listening . . . yes . . . yes . . . very well, sir. (*He hangs up the receiver. To GERLACH and ZHIKHAREV.*) A party of journalists and cinema operators from Berlin will be coming here the day after tomorrow. They want to take pictures of the fraternization between the Russian peasants and their German liberators . . . for the benefit of world public opinion, you know, Herr Colonel. We must arrange such a touching scene that the world public . . . that is to say, a dozen or so idiotic civilians in Stockholm or Geneva . . . will just melt into sentimental tears . . .

GERLACH: That's all very well, Major. But I am a little old-fashioned, myself. . . . You know my views on the subject of propaganda. . . . Old Bismarck built up the grandeur of Germany, and he got along without movie cameras.

KRASHKE: But he also got along without a Russian campaign . . . In fact, he was opposed to such a campaign. So, as you see, your Bismarck was wrong sometimes.

GERLACH: Who knows, perhaps he was right . . . Let's play a game of poker. (*They sit down to cards. The camp is plunged in sleep. Only the bayonets of the sentries gleam in the moonlight. KLEVTSOV, glancing around furtively, enters the COLONEL's tent, where he finds ANTONINA unconscious on the floor.*)

KLEVTSOV (*raising her by the shoulders*): What's the matter with you, Nastya? What has happened to you? . . .

ANTONINA: They want to kill Pavlik . . .

KLEVTSOV: Which Pavlik?

ANTONINA: Kasatkin's . . . my son . . .

KLEVTSOV: So you are . . . ?

ANTONINA: Yes . . . Betray me if you want to. . . . Yes, I am Kasatkin's wife. . . . I don't want to live any longer. . . . Betray me, do you hear! . . .

KLEVTSOV: Pull yourself together. . . . They will suspect something . . . get up!

ANTONINA: I don't care . . . Let them suspect . . .

KLEVTSOV: Listen to me. Run as fast as you can to Kasatkin. . . . (ANTONINA rises.) Tell him the whole story. And tell him also that the day after tomorrow the muzhiks are going to be photographed for the movies in the big house. . . . Orders have been given to assemble all the women there and all the old men that are left in the village. Their whole headquarters staff will be here. The general himself is coming. It may be useful to Kasatkin to know that. It's the truth I am telling you. (ANTONINA, swaying, disappears into the night.) And as for the children, we shall get even with them yet! (He is about to leave. At that moment a woman's shrieking is heard, and AGAFYA is seen running towards ZHIKHAREV's tent, pursued by two GERMAN SOLDIERS. KLEVTSOV seizes her by the arm.)

AGAFYA: Efim! Efim! Save me, let me see the master.

KLEVTSOV (sternly): The master is asleep. I can't disturb him.

AGAFYA: Sanka! My daughter! . . . They have dragged her into the woods . . . Efim, have mercy on me! . . . Let me throw myself at the master's feet. . . . For God's sake! . . . She is my only child. . . . Five of them dragged her away . . .

KLEVTSOV: I can't let you disturb him.

AGAFYA: Let me pass, you brute! You lackey!

KLEVTSOV: Steady now, steady! . . . (ZHIKHAREV, in pajamas, appears at the tent door.)

ZHIKHAREV: What is the matter? Who is making this abominable noise and disturbing everybody's rest?

AGAFYA: Master! Your highness! Save my Sanka, my daughter! . . .

The soldiers have dragged her into the woods. . . . Save her, and I will pray for you all my life. (*Throws herself at his feet.*) Have pity. . . . Don't allow my daughter to be ruined! (*She clings to ZHIKHAREV's legs.*)

ZHIKHAREV: Efim, drag this fool away!

AGAFYA: Your highness, you yourself said there would be peace and order. What peace and order is this!

ZHIKHAREV: Now, go away, Agafya!

AGAFYA: I won't go! I won't go, even if you kill me! Oh, my daughter, my Sanushka! . . . The villains, the villains!

ZHIKHAREV: Have her flogged! (*Gives an order in German to the SOLDIERS, who drag the shrieking AGAFYA away.*)

KRASHKE (*emerging from the tent*): Those animals literally give you no peace. (*Yawns.*) One day they break in with their shrieks and howls, another day with hand grenades. Who was the soldier who allowed the old woman through? Five days in the guardroom! . . .

GERLACH (*emerging from his tent and looking towards the horizon*): What is that glow in the sky? And where does all this smoke come from? . . .

A SOLDIER (*wearing corporal's stripes, saluting*): It's the crops burning, Herr Colonel. Some unknown miscreants . . .

KRASHKE: Summon the headman! (*To ZHIKHAREV, scornfully.*) "Smoke of the fatherland!" . . . Of your fatherland, Herr Zhikharrev . . . It is not so sweet and pleasant as you would have had us believe a little while ago.

ZHIKHAREV: I swear I am not to blame . . . Believe me, I can scarcely recognize my own people . . .

GERLACH: What a smoky, what a bitter land! . . . I hope this smoke does not suffocate us in the end . . .

KRASHKE: What do you imply by that, Herr Colonel?

GERLACH: That old Bismarck was not mistaken as often as you think, Herr Major.

KRASHKE: I feel I have no right to listen to that, Herr Colonel.

GERLACH: But I feel I have the right to say it. For I love Germany and I hate the Russians no less than you do, young man. I know that

you will now retire to your tent and send a report of this night's conversation to the Gestapo, as usual. Well, perhaps it is for the best. Let the Gestapo know what old officers of the Imperial Army think when they see these Russian conflagrations. . . . Good night, gentlemen! (*He turns brusquely and enters the tent. Enter LISOVSKY.*)

LISOVSKY: Did you call me, sirs?

KRASHKE: You lie snoring, you filthy worm, while the crops are again set on fire under your very nose. . . . One more fire, and I will string you up on the first birch tree, you disgusting, black-hearted little wretch! (*Exit.*)

LISOVSKY (*shrugging his shoulders and muttering to himself*): The devil only knows how to steer in these waters. . . . You have to twist and turn like a mouse between two cats, and try to guess which will swallow you first. Of course, I would be better off under the Germans. I could become a man of importance . . . even the mayor of Kovalsk. Why not? But, on the other hand, it is too early to think that it's all up with the others either. (*Glances around.*) The chief thing is to keep your ears open and your eyes skinned. This is like a devilish game of billiards, and you have to be careful you don't get your own head into the pocket instead of a ball. (*Exit.*)

(*ZYBIN and ZABUDKO creep up to the bridge.*)

ZABUDKO (*at the bridge*): Hand over the explosives, Cornelius . . . Snappy! (*ZYBIN hands him a package.*) Now the fuse! Matches! (*The GERMAN SENTRY suddenly fires into the air and cries something in German.*)

KRASHKE: Herr Colonel! . . . An attack . . . Guerrillas! . . .

GERLACH (*pulling out his revolver*): Follow me, men! . . .

ZABUDKO (*to ZYBIN*): They have seen us, the swine! . . . Quick! Let's have the three-second fuse, Cornelius . . . Now, run! . . . Run! Run, I tell you, while all this pandemonium is on! Get out of it, the devil take you! (*ZYBIN runs off.*) Good-bye! . . . Think well of me! . . . (*Lights the fuse.*)

CURTAIN

SCENE FIVE

Back in Damp Ravine, where the guerrilla detachment is quartered. Night is nearly over, and the first faint signs of dawn are perceived. But in spite of the late hour, the guerrillas are not asleep. KASATKIN is pacing up and down, his hands behind his back and his face gray from agitation and sleeplessness. At the end of the ravine stands a SENTRY with a rifle.

NATALYA SKITNEVA (*seated at the entrance to the dugout*): It is getting lighter. . . . What is the time, Comrade Kasatkin?

KASATKIN: It is after three.

NATALYA: And our lads are not here yet . . .

KASATKIN (*with irritation*): I can see that for myself . . .

SHCHUSS: I keep staring and staring until my eyes ache, but there is no glare in the sky. . . . Can they have been caught?

NATALYA: They would have killed themselves first. They wouldn't allow themselves to be caught alive. . . . They know that would mean being insulted, tortured, torn to pieces. . . . How merry they were when they left—as if they were going to a wedding. . . . (*Wipes the tears from her eyes.*) And Petya was still so young; he had his whole life before him . . .

KASATKIN: That will do, Natalya. It's too early to hold a wake over them yet. (*Shivers.*) What a raw night! . . .

RASPASHONKOV: No scouts from Yakutovich yet. . . . Stephen, I must warn you, we have very few cartridges left . . . and only fifty grenades . . .

KASATKIN: I know . . . don't keep rubbing it in . . .

RASPASHONKOV: What if we tried to break through, the whole detachment in a body—grenades in hand? It would be better than sitting here in this mousetrap of a ravine.

KASATKIN: Wait a bit. There is always time to tempt death. Perhaps our fellows will return. . . . It will be much more interesting discussing what to do then . . .

(*A deafening roar is heard in the distance. Somewhere on the very*

edge of the night a huge column of flame heaves up into the sky. Then follow a second and a third explosion.)

KASATKIN (*hoarse with excitement*): Did you hear that?

NATALYA (*leaping to her feet*): I heard it! Oh, my dears, my dears, I heard it!

SHCHUSS (*crossing himself*): Praise be to God . . .

KASATKIN: Don't praise God, old man, praise our men! Praise our Vyazovka lads! . . . No, fellows like that would never let you down. They would go into the jaws of Hell itself and tear the devil's own head off . . . The bridge is blown up! . . . Let the Nazis try to start an offensive now! Just let them try!

SENTRY: Who goes there? Halt! Give the password.

ANTONINA: Trigger! A friend.

KASATKIN: Let her pass! Let her pass! Tony, did you hear those explosions? Did you see the fireworks our fellows let off?

ANTONINA: I did.

SHCHUSS: Just look at that glow! They will have to make haste. I hope they don't get caught.

KASATKIN: Oh, they won't get caught. They will get out of it safely. (*To ANTONINA.*) Why so late?

ANTONINA: Steve, I have something to tell you. (*Leads him aside and whispers, scarcely suppressing her sobs.*) Steve, they have taken our Pavlik. They found out he is our son . . . and they seized him in reprisal for the fuel cars . . . they are going to kill him today . . .

KASATKIN: That can't be! . . . Pavlik! . . . Tell me the truth; is he still alive?

ANTONINA: He is still alive. They have locked him up in a shed at the back of the Commandant's house . . .

KASATKIN: The villains! . . . to take reprisals against children! Well, we shall see! . . . (*To RASPASHONKOV.*) Raspashonkov, order the horses to be saddled! Hand out the cartridges and the grenades! . . . We are off to Vyazovka. (*To ANTONINA.*) Calm yourself, Tony, . . . The kid will be saved yet . . . today! And if we have to die, we shall die together with Pavlik. . . . Now, don't cry . . .

ANTONINA: Give me a rifle . . . I will fight too . . .

KASATKIN: Why not? . . . Let's go . . .

ANTONINA: Yes, there is another thing . . . Klevtsov told me to tell you that the Germans are going to take a movie picture in Vyazovka tomorrow. They are going to photograph the peasants greeting their returned landlord, to show how friendly the Russian people are to the German army. The whole headquarters staff is coming, and a lot of journalists from Berlin. I checked it up—Klevtsov is telling the truth. The men have all been ordered to wear clean shirts . . .

KASATKIN: What time is it scheduled for?

ANTONINA: Seven o'clock.

RASPASHONKOV (*approaching*): The horses are saddled, as you ordered.

KASATKIN: Hem! . . . Well, have them unsaddled. We shall put it off until tomorrow.

ANTONINA: Stephen, what are you saying? Have you forgotten Pavlik . . . Why, he is to be . . .

KASATKIN (*taking her tenderly by the arm*): Wait, Tony. We will talk about it in a minute. (*To RASPASHONKOV.*) So, bear in mind, tomorrow we go to Vyazovka as guests of the Germans to have our pictures taken. . . . Let everybody be properly armed, with hand grenades in their pockets. This is not an opportunity to be missed.

RASPASHONKOV: And if they recognize us in Vyazovka and betray us?

KASATKIN: Who?

RASPASHONKOV: Lissovsky.

KASATKIN: He may do that. It's very probable, almost certain that he will.

RASPASHONKOV: Then what's the point of going to certain death?

KASATKIN: The point is this. While the Germans have their hands full with us—and we won't let ourselves to be taken so easily; we'll give them a good run for their money—Yakutovich will come up with his regiment and strike at Vyazovka. Is that clear?

RASPASHONKOV: If I understand you, our task is to take the first blow and divert the attention of the Germans. Is that correct?

KASATKIN: Quite correct. What do you think of it? Is there any point in it, or not?

RASPASHONKOV: No doubt about it: there is.

KASATKIN: Only, to make sure of the job, we must get in touch with Yakutovich. I will try to get to him myself tonight. If I succeed in getting through, it will be splendid. If I fail, don't go to Vyazovka yourselves. You will just be throwing your lives away for nothing.

ANTONINA: But, Steve, what about Pavlik? . . .

KASATKIN (*taking her by the arm and drawing her aside*): Listen to me, Tony, listen to the end. . . . Do you think my heart is not bleeding too? . . . But we cannot go to Vyazovka just now. . . . We must not, don't you see? . . . We might save Pavlik, but then we would not be able to strike at the Germans from two sides, we would not be able to recapture Vyazovka and smash their headquarters. . . . Because there are very few of us here, and the whole point is to strike a sudden blow, simultaneously with Yakutovich . . . I have thought it all out. There is no other way.

ANTONINA: I understand. . . . But Pavlik . . .

KASATKIN: I know, I know. But, all the same, we must go tomorrow and not today. Listen to me, Tony, listen to me carefully and try to understand, as a mother. You and I are not the only ones, and Pavlik is not the only one. Thousands of mothers and fathers like you and me are now mourning their children. It is for the sake of these thousands that we must not go today . . . We have no right to go today. . . . Do you understand, Tony?

ANTONINA: I understand . . . I understand with my head, but my heart cannot accept it. . . . Steve, I implore you, save Pavlik! . . . They will kill him . . . Don't you understand, they will kill him. It will mean the death of me too, Stephen . . . He will be dead, dead! Dead forever. . . . Steve, save Pavlik . . .

KASATKIN: I cannot alter my decision . . . I must say farewell, my son, my little Pavlik! Farewell, my darling, the light of my life! . . . I never thought you would come to such an end. . . . Farewell, my little son! (*Turns away and sobs.*)

RASPASHONKOV (*approaching*): Our fellows have not returned. It's high time they were here . . .

KASATKIN: Something must have happened to them . . .

NATALYA: Can it be that they are dead? (*An old woman descends into the ravine, tottering and stumbling. The SENTRY stops her. She pushes him aside. It is AGAFYA.*)

AGAFYA: Let me pass. . . . I want to see the commander . . . Comrade Kasatkin. I am Agafya. Don't you see I am Agafya? Let me pass, dear. I beg you, for Christ's sake . . .

ANTONINA: Steve, it is Agafya.

KASATKIN: Let her through. (*The SENTRY allows her to pass. KASATKIN greets her in silence, gazing at her gloomily and sternly. She throws herself at his feet.*)

AGAFYA: I have dragged my way here to you, Comrade Chairman. . . . Forgive me, old fool that I am. . . . There is no living under the Germans. . . . My daughter, my poor Sanka! . . .

KASATKIN: So you have come. Well, is it all the same to you whether you live under the Soviets or under the Germans?

AGAFYA: I confess my shame to all the villagers, to all the people. (*She struggles to her feet, and then bows deeply from the waist, to the GUERRILLAS, four times in each direction. The GUERRILLAS look on in stern silence.*) I beg forgiveness from my brothers, from the people. . . . I have disgraced my family and my own dear sons. . . . If you can, soften your hearts towards me, countrymen. . . . I am alone now. My Sanka is no more. And I myself in my old age have felt the lashes of the master's whip on my own back. . . . (*She falls, then rises on her hands.*) Write to my sons in the army. Tell them to demand a reckoning for everything. . . . Tell them my dying words! Pyotr, Andrei, fight for the Soviet government! There can be no life without it. . . . Farewell, dear friends. . . . Have I your forgiveness?

KASATKIN: You have.

GUERRILLAS: You have! You have, Agafya! We bear you no ill will.

(*AGAFYA shivers and then lies stiff and still. The GUERRILLAS bare their heads. A pause. ZYBIN is seen slowly descending the path, dragging with difficulty a sack which we recognize to be the pillow-case*

containing silver he had shut in the safe on leaving Vyazovka.)

KASATKIN: Here they are! They have come! Hurrah!

NATALYA: Oh, the darlings, at last!

GUERRILLAS: Hurrah! Hurrah! They are here. They are back!

ZYBIN: Allow me to report, Comrade Commander! Your orders have been carried out. The bridge has been blown up. The tanks have been written off the account. (*Suddenly he presses his hand to his side.*) Oh, the devil! That's the liver again. Up to its old tricks . . .

KASATKIN: And where's Petya?

ZYBIN: I don't know. When the bridge blew up I lost sight of him, and haven't seen him since. (*Dejectedly.*) I am afraid it is all up with Zabudko. He didn't have time to crawl away. He used the three-second fuse . . . he lit it . . .

NATALYA: Dead! Petya dead! . . .

RASPASHONKOV: Do you really think he's been killed? He was a fine lad. Tell the truth, I loved him, the scoundrell!

KASATKIN (*baring his head*): Farewell, Comrade Zabudko! Farewell, Petya! You were a real man! (*The GUERRILLAS all rise to their feet. At that moment the strains of an accordion are heard. They draw nearer and nearer. Above the ravine, PETYA ZABUDKO appears, smiling broadly, his eyes gleaming, the bellows of the accordion stretched wide. He starts to sing at the top of his voice.*)

KASATKIN (*hoarsely*): Petya? Is that you? Safe and sound? . . .

ZABUDKO: Safe and sound. And I didn't walk here, either; I drove.

KASATKIN: Drove? On what?

ZABUDKO: Comrade Commander, allow me to report everything in order.

KASATKIN: Well, speak up . . .

ZABUDKO: As soon as I lit the match I dived straight into the water . . . I have swum and dived in this river ever since I was a child, you know. . . . Believe me, I didn't even hear the explosion. . . . It was only afterwards I heard the shells bursting in the tanks. . . . There was a regular pandemonium, I can tell you—a real circus! Officers were running about in their underclothes . . . And then, you know, I suddenly felt I must get hold of that accordion. Forgive me, Com-

rade Commander, I couldn't help myself . . . I am crazy when it comes to music. . . . So I crept to the spot where I heard them playing it the other day—I remembered exactly where it was, and I made straight for it. . . . There were no soldiers around; they had fled in all directions. And there lay my mother-of-pearl beauty—near a tankette! . . . Well, an idea struck me like a flash . . . I seized the accordion, pulled open the hatch of the tankette, jumped in, and stepped on the gas for all I was worth. That's about all. There was some panic there, I can tell you.

KASATKIN: Do you mean to say you brought the tankette here?

ZABUDKO: Of course . . . what's the sense of letting good property lie about loose! . . . And it is in fine condition too; and what's more, the fuel tanks are full. I left it standing at the edge of the ravine.

KASATKIN (*embracing ZABUDKO*): Thanks, Petya, you are a fine boy! . . . Now we will get in touch with Yakutovich, all right! Comrade Raspashonkov, I think we had a uniform—taken from a dead German officer. Bring it here! . . . Nothing will stop me from getting through to Yakutovich now . . .

RASPASHONKOV: Stephen, let me come with you . . . I can't sit around idle any longer . . . I am fed up with it . . . I must stretch my bones . . .

KASATKIN: Stop nagging, Raspashonkov. You are a regular grouch. . . . Well, come along if you like. Only, I must warn you, there will be a little stop on the way. . . . So take as many grenades along as you can. (*To ANTONINA.*) Don't cry, Tony! Don't cry on account of the boy. . . . It's too early to mourn over him yet, I tell you . . .

CURTAIN

SCENE SIX

Command post of YAKUTOVICH's regiment. On a little mound in front of the dugout, YAKUTOVICH sits Turkish-fashion, a map spread on his crossed legs. Opposite him is TSIBULIN, his chief of staff. To the left an operator sits at a field telephone.

TELEPHONE OPERATOR: Is that Amur? Falcon's speaking. This is Falcon. . . . What? . . . You can't hear? Take the wool out of your ears. What? . . . It isn't wool, it's the noise of the guns? (*To YAKUTOVICH.*) Comrade Major, the guns in Zhidel's battalion are going so hard the battalion commander can't make out what we are saying . . .

YAKUTOVICH: Try to make him understand. Speak distinctly, in syllables in between the explosions . . . (*AIDE-DE-CAMP enters.*)

AIDE-DE-CAMP: There is a newspaper correspondent from Moscow come to see you, Comrade Major.

YAKUTOVICH (*raising his head from the map*): Let him through.

CORRESPONDENT (*enters and introduces himself*): Nikitin, from the Moscow *Izvestiya*.

YAKUTOVICH: I am glad to meet you . . . I have heard about you. . . . I have seen your articles . . .

CORRESPONDENT (*pulling out a notebook*): Our newspaper would like to have a pen portrait of you, Major.

YAKUTOVICH: I am at your service. Very flattered, I am sure.

CORRESPONDENT: Let us begin with your childhood . . .

YAKUTOVICH: Ay, childhood is a wonderful time . . .

CORRESPONDENT: You were born in the town of . . . ? (*AIDE-DE-CAMP enters.*)

YAKUTOVICH: Poltava . . .

AIDE-DE-CAMP: Some scouts have arrived, sir.

YAKUTOVICH: Send them here. (*To the CORRESPONDENT.*) Pardon me. Would you be so kind as to wait a few minutes: then we shall resume our talk, and have a glass of tea, too. You have arrived at a very opportune moment. Things happen to be quiet just now. We came out of battle yesterday. . . . In a word, we have a lot of time . . . (*Scout enters. He is wearing drab-green overalls camouflaged with grass, leaves, and twigs.*)

SCOUT (*reporting*): Senior Lieutenant Prokoshin, commander of the reconnaissance platoon of the 162nd Rifle Regiment . . .

YAKUTOVICH: What have you to report, Prokoshin? Have you got in touch with Kasatkin?

PROKOSHIN: No, sir. All the roads have been mined, even the forest

paths. Two of our motorcyclists proceeding ahead of us were blown up. We could only make our way through the woods at night. They are swarming with patrols. We observed a large concentration of troops on the Kovalsk-Vyazovka road.

YAKUTOVICH: How strong, roughly?

PROKOSHIN: Not less than a division, judging by the staff cars.

YAKUTOVICH: How far did you get?

PROKOSHIN: About seven or eight miles behind their lines. We had another mile or so to go to reach Kasatkin's detachment, but at the last moment we were detected. Two of our men, Zhigulov and Ivashin, were captured. They both got away.

YAKUTOVICH: Fine lads!

PROKOSHIN: But at the cost of their lives. Zhigulov shot himself. Ivashin blew himself up with a hand grenade together with his light machine gun and four Germans . . .

YAKUTOVICH: What a pity! . . . They were such fine scouts . . . regular treasures . . . Did you recover their bodies?

PROKOSHIN: Yes, sir.

YAKUTOVICH: Have them buried with honors, and write to their relatives telling how they died like heroes. . . . You may go.

PROKOSHIN: Here is Zhigulov's revolver. (*Turns to leave.*)

YAKUTOVICH: Why are you limping?

PROKOSHIN: I was wounded in the leg. I forgot to report it.

YAKUTOVICH (*to the AIDE-DE-CAMP*): Dratvin! Call a stretcher and bearers at once! Lieutenant Prokoshin, I order you to proceed on a stretcher to the regimental dressing station. (*Exit PROKOSHIN. To the CHIEF-OF-STAFF.*) They will never go and get their wounds tended if you don't order them to. What a pity they did not get through to Kasatkin. This is the twelfth day we have had no contact with him . . .

TSIBULIN: Well, if they couldn't get there, it means that even an eagle couldn't . . .

YAKUTOVICH: Yes, if Prokoshin didn't, it means that a snake couldn't glide through, water couldn't seep through, a mole couldn't burrow through . . . (*To the CORRESPONDENT.*) He is a splendid scout—it

would be hard to find a better one . . . Now, there is a subject for you . . . why not write about him?

TELEPHONE OPERATOR: Is that Amur? This is Falcon! Falcon! . . . This is Falcon! . . .

TSIBULIN: The Germans are evidently massing a big striking force on the Kovalsk-Vyazovka line in preparation for an offensive.

YAKUTOVICH: Yes, and our job should be to forestall them by a counterblow. But how to get in touch with Kasatkin? . . . (*Examines the map.*) He is here somewhere, in this forest. . . . And we are here, and in between us there is Colonel von Gerlach's division. . . . Now, if Kasatkin were to hit him in the tail, while we attacked head-on, Herr Gerlach would find himself in a tight fix. . . . That is clear, Tsibulin, isn't it?

TSIBULIN: Yes, without Kasatkin's support we cannot start an attack . . .

YAKUTOVICH: Everything necessary has been invented for this war: tanks, telephone, radio. But they have not invented a means of communication by mental telepathy. . . . Now if Kasatkin were only to realize how badly I need him and were to project his disembodied spirit to this spot . . . Kasatkin! Do you hear me? But that is sheer mysticism, of course . . . (*To the CORRESPONDENT.*) Well, I am at your service now.

CORRESPONDENT (*pulling out his notebook*): You were saying you were born in Poltava . . .

YAKUTOVICH: Oh, yes, Poltava—where the famous Battle of Poltava took place, you know. But, between ourselves, that wasn't much of a battle. . . . Mere child's play. Nothing to compare to the battle we fought yesterday, when Sergeant Gutin, although twice wounded, drawn up to his full height, stalked right up to a tank . . . Just imagine the scene, machine-gun bullets whizzing all around him, but he keeps steadily marching. Now, there is a subject for you! . . . Be sure to write about him . . .

CORRESPONDENT: I certainly will. And so you say you were born in Poltava . . .

TELEPHONE OPERATOR: Hallo! This is Falcon. Is that Volga? . . . I

am listening. Yes . . . yes . . . yes. . . . (*Puts down the receiver.*) Sir, the commander of the second battery reports an enemy tankette making down on them at full speed from the enemy's flank, without firing a shot. He asks, what shall he do?

YAKUTOVICH: Another dastardly trick . . . but we are up to their game. Tell him to allow the tankette within one hundred yards and then open fire.

OPERATOR: Very well, sir. (*Into the receiver.*) Listen, Volga; this is Falcon! Thirty-six orders you to allow the tankette within one hundred yards and then open fire.

YAKUTOVICH: Well, yes, I was born in Poltava . . . It is a smallish town, a provincial capital in the past, buried in green orchards . . .

OPERATOR: This is Falcon! What's that? Aha . . . aha . . . aha. . . . (*Lays down the receiver.*) The commander of the second battery says that the tankette has slowed down and has put out a white flag.

YAKUTOVICH: Oh, yes, that's an old trick of theirs . . . this is not the first time they have shown the white flag and then begun banging away with their automatics. Tell the battery commander not to cease fire.

OPERATOR: Very well, sir. (*Into the receiver.*) Thirty-six says you are not to cease fire.

YAKUTOVICH (*to* CORRESPONDENT): Well, where were we?

CORRESPONDENT: You were saying that Poltava is buried in green orchards . . .

OPERATOR: This is Falcon! Yes . . . very well. (*Puts down the receiver.*) The tankette has been smashed, sir. Two Germans have climbed out of it. What's to be done? Destroy them or capture them alive?

YAKUTOVICH: Capture them alive.

OPERATOR: Thirty-six orders you to take them prisoner. What? Right away. (*To the MAJOR.*) The battery commander says it is impossible to take them alive because the Germans have opened heavy fire at the tankette from their front lines.

YAKUTOVICH: Let them try to take them alive all the same. (*To the*

CORRESPONDENT.) This will be a scoop for you . . . Prisoners just captured . . . You could write your story about them . . .

OPERATOR: Hallo! This is Falcon! What? (*To YAKUTOVICH.*) The battery commander reports that two Germans have been taken prisoner. One of them is in officer's uniform . . .

YAKUTOVICH: Have them sent here to the command post without delay.

OPERATOR: Very well. (*Takes up receiver. To YAKUTOVICH.*) They are on their way now in a small truck. They should be here in a couple of minutes.

YAKUTOVICH (*to CORRESPONDENT*): I would advise you to write mostly about our heroes. Are you interested in guerrillas? There is one of them by name of Kasatkin. . . . If you could only get in touch with him, that would be a story for you. . . . Oh, Kasatkin, Kasatkin! Kasatkin, don't you hear me!

CORRESPONDENT: So, to continue . . . The town of Poltava, buried in green orchards . . .

YAKUTOVICH: Oh, such wonderful orchards, you know. . . . What pears! What melons! . . . Yes, by the way, there is a gunner in our regiment by name of Melon . . . Now, there's a man who should be figuring in the columns of the central newspapers . . .

(*At this moment three German prisoners enter under convoy—RASPASHONKOV and KASATKIN, the latter carrying PAVLIK in his arms.*)

KASATKIN: How do you do, Major?

YAKUTOVICH: What the devil does this mean? By heavens, this is mysticism, if you like! Kasatkin, how did you get here? And what is that masquerade costume you are wearing? Where did you get the boy from? And who is this German?

RASPASHONKOV: I would request you not to insult me, Comrade Major.

KASATKIN: We shall tell you everything in proper order. But allow me to sit down.

YAKUTOVICH: Why, you are wounded! . . . Dratvin! . . . Fetch a surgeon! Stretcher-bearers! Dressings!

KASATKIN: There is plenty of time for that . . . I have some impor-

tant news for you. Our men have found out that the Germans are preparing to make a thrust at Kovalsk the day after tomorrow.

YAKUTOVICH: That is very important, Kasatkin. We must forestall them. We also have been making preparations for a counterblow. But tell me first, Kasatkin, what is the meaning of this fancy-dress costume . . .

KASATKIN: What is there to tell? . . . I saw that none of your scouts were coming through, and none of my people could get through to you. Well, one of our lads happened to capture a German tankette, so I decided to drive here on it with my Chief of Staff. And here we are . . .

YAKUTOVICH (*clapping his hands*): On a German tankette! And in German officer's uniform! Right through the front lines! Why, man, that is a Hell of a feat! A regular Arabian Nights tale! And who is the youngster?

KASATKIN (*stroking PAVLIK's head*): This is Pavlik . . . my son . . . We picked him up at one of the stopping places . . .

RASPASHONKOV: Why, Major, you will sooner get a fish to sing than get him to tell a story. . . . He doesn't like talking about himself. The Germans had seized his son and were going to kill him. So what do you think this daredevil does? He drives up to Vyazovka in this tankette, runs it full-tilt into the shed where the youngster was locked up and smashed it to pieces, flings a hand grenade at the feet of the sentry, calmly lifts the boy on his back and climbs with him into the tank, and then says to me, "Well, give her the gas now, Raspashonkov. Drive as if we were off to the country for the week-end!"

YAKUTOVICH: That won't do, Kasatkin. . . . This false modesty is out of place, you know . . . I am always willing to talk about myself. (*To the CORRESPONDENT.*) That is so, isn't it? Now, where were we?

CORRESPONDENT: About Poltava being buried in green orchards . . .

YAKUTOVICH: Oh, bother Poltava and its green orchards! . . . Take your fountain pen, comrade, and write. . . . (*To KASATKIN.*) Where were you born, Kasatkin?

KASATKIN: In Kineshma. Why do you ask?

YAKUTOVICH (*to CORRESPONDENT*): Well then, write. The heroic

guerrilla fighter, Stephen Kasatkin, was born in Kineshma, a town buried in green orchards . . .

KASATKIN: But there are no orchards in Kineshma, Comrade Yakutovich . . .

YAKUTOVICH: No orchards? . . . Never mind, there will be. After the war we shall lay out orchards and gardens in Kineshma. And in the largest of the gardens, in the central avenue, there will stand a statue to Kasatkin . . . to this snub-nosed Kasatkin, here. . . . Mark my words . . .

CURTAIN

SCENE SEVEN

A large hall in the squire's mansion in Vyazovka. It is a pillared hall, with plenty of windows in all four walls and an interior staircase leading up to a balcony, where during a festival the orchestra used to sit. One side is skirted by a veranda. In the corners stand Klieg lights in preparation for the filming. KLEVTSOV is seen polishing the parquet floor. KRASHKE, ZHIKHAREV, and VON GERLACH are seen on the stage.

KRASHKE: Is everything ready, Herr Oberleutnant?

ZHIKHAREV: I think so, Herr Major.

KRASHKE: Well, bear in mind that the chief cameraman, Herr Bruno Wolf, has photographed the Führer himself . . .

ZHIKHAREV: I hope he will be satisfied with the arrangements, Herr Major. My muzhiks will conduct themselves properly, I am sure. I have had a talk with them.

KRASHKE: Go and see whether they have already assembled, those muzhiks of yours.

ZHIKHAREV: Very well. (*Exit.*)

GERLACH: "My muzhiks." . . . That fool makes me sick and tired.

KRASHKE: He really thinks he is the master here. (*Laughs.*) The jackass does not suspect that when the war is over, all the land in Russia will be divided up among the German officers and men who have

distinguished themselves on the Eastern Front. This land will belong to those who conquered it, the Germans, and not to a lot of Slavonic parasites! (*Enter ZHIKHAREV.*)

ZHIKHAREV: Everything is ready, Herr Major. The muzhiks are waiting for permission to come in. We're keeping close watch on them. (*Enter BRUNO WOLF, the cameraman, with his assistants and light operators. They are all in military uniform.*)

BRUNO WOLF: Heil Hitler!

GERLACH, KRASHKE, and ZHIKHAREV: Heil, Hitler!

KRASHKE (*to GERLACH and ZHIKHAREV*): Allow me to introduce you. This is Herr Bruno Wolf, who has filmed our victories along the whole line of march of our glorious armies to Warsaw, Boulogne, Dunkirk, and Paris.

BRUNO WOLF (*smugly*): . . . and Narvik, Sofia, Crete, Athens—and today, gentlemen (*consults his notebook*), Vyazovka.

KRASHKE: What is your program today?

BRUNO WOLF: First the peasants will stand in a group here . . . we shall put a few of the most patriarchal-looking burghers in the front row, carrying—What do they call that ceremony in Russia?

ZHIKHAREV: Presentation of the bread and salt. . . . By the way, I wonder whether the muzhiks brought it with them.

BRUNO WOLF: Don't worry, Herr Offizier. Willy, let us have the Russian bread and salt! (*An assistant hands him a huge round loaf.*) This loaf never gets stale; it is made of papier-mâché. It has done us yeoman service in Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, and other Slavonic countries. . . . Next, the squire enters the hall . . . Happy reunion! . . . A respectable, dignified-looking burgher goes down on one knee and kisses the hand of his newly-returned master. . . . The peasants bow low from the waist. . . . Then the German officers are photographed surrounded by the peasants . . . But I don't see the squire, gentlemen! . . .

KRASHKE (*pointing to ZHIKHAREV*): Here he is—Volodya Zhikharov, Russian landlord . . .

BRUNO WOLF: Oh, it's you, Herr Oberleutnant . . . But you will have to change into mufti . . .

KRASHKE: Naturally, Herr Zhikharev. It wouldn't be altogether convenient for a Russian landlord to be wearing that uniform . . .

ZHIKHAREV: Very well. (*To KLEVTSOV.*) Efim, go and lay out my black suit . . . I brought it along in case of need.

KLEVTSOV: Very well, master. (*He disappears up the staircase.*)

BRUNO WOLF: Well then, we shall do it like this. (*He takes ZHIKHAREV by the shoulders and moves him about like a marionette.*) You will descend this staircase wearing a happy smile—and your black suit. . . . Your peasants will rush forward to greet you. General rejoicing and jubilation. . . . I have a notion that I am going to get some good shots. . . . Well, go and get your clothes changed. . . . (*ZHIKHAREV goes up the staircase.*) Shall we begin, Herr Major? . . .

KRASHKE (*shouting through the window*): Herr Lissovsky! Lead the peasants in!

LISOVSKY (*entering the hall, trembling with fear and nervousness*): Allow me to report, Herr Major, there is some funny business going on . . .

KRASHKE: What's the matter?

LISOVSKY (*aside*): The hour has come when you must make up your mind, Jeremiah . . . You have got to decide which side to take . . . Phew! . . . May God have mercy on his servant and keep him from harm! (*To KRASHKE, desperately.*) Herr Major, they are here . . . they have all come in a body . . . they are outside there with the muzhiks . . .

KRASHKE: I don't know what you are driving at. You must be drunk.

LISOVSKY: Oh, no I am not, sir . . . I am quite sober. . . . But the guerrillas have come. . . . They are outside. . . . They may kill us, your honor . . .

KRASHKE: What guerrillas? What nonsense are you talking?

LISOVSKY: It is the honest truth, sir . . . I swear to God. The guerrillas are outside, disguised as muzhiks . . . They are armed with hand grenades . . . And their commander, Kasatkin, is with them too.

GERLACH: Do you hear that, Herr Major? Instead of a peaceful cel-

celebration, it looks as if we are going to have a little massacre in the oriental style. These nice muzhiks want to slaughter us all off like woodcocks . . .

KRASHKE: What swine! (*Reloads his revolver.*)

GERLACH: Herr Major, have two companies of automatic riflemen placed in the rear yard. Call out a squad of musicians armed with rifles. They thought they would outwit the German Command, did they? Well, we shall see! . . . (*Exit KRASHKE.*)

BRUNO WOLF: When we were shooting a similar scene once in Bosnia we also had to resort to firearms. . . . Those damned Slavonic scum . . . they can't stand good order . . .

KRASHKE (*returning*): All measures have been taken, sir.

GERLACH: Splendid.

KRASHKE: Herr Lissovsky, call in the rabble! And don't tremble like that, the devil take you! . . . Wipe the sweat from your brow . . . you look like a wet chicken . . . Get along! . . . (*Exit LISSOVSKY.*)

GERLACH (*to BRUNO WOLF*): Well, even if the ceremonial meeting does not come off, you will get a wonderful picture of the capture of a gang of guerrillas.

BRUNO WOLF: By God, that will make a sensational newsreel! . . .

(*Enter the collective farm women, old men and children who figured in Scene Two and together with them the guerrillas—KASATKIN, RASPASHONKOV, ZYBKIN, ZABUDKO, ANTONINA, SHCHUSS, NATALYA, and others.*)

KRASHKE (*in an ingratiating, almost sing-song voice*): This way, this way, friends . . . We are so glad to see you, so glad. Make yourselves at home, make yourselves at home.

LISSOVSKY: We are much obliged to you for your kindness, your honor.

RASPASHONKOV (*glancing at the clock*): It is nearly seven. There should be the rocket signal soon . . .

KASATKIN: There should. Yakutovich is not the man to let us down. We will start in about five minutes.

ZABUDKO (*to KASATKIN*): That grey-haired fellow is their colonel commander. And that fellow with the heavy jaws and eyes like cockroaches is their lieutenant . . .

RASPASHONKOV: How do you know?

ZABUDKO: Why, he is the fellow I took the accordion from . . .

RASPASHONKOV: Take care he doesn't recognize you.

KASATKIN (*going to LISSOVSKY, who tries to keep at a respectable distance from the guerrillas*): How do you do, Jeremiah?

LISSOVSKY: How do you do . . . I am really very glad . . .

KASATKIN: Listen, Lissovsky, if you betray us, you will have only yourself to blame for the consequences. I will kill you on the spot.

LISSOVSKY: I swear by God! . . . may I be struck dead on this spot! . . .

KASATKIN: Don't swear. But remember what I told you.

LISSOVSKY (*aside*): Oh, Lord! . . . What a mess I am in! I shall never get out of this alive . . .

KASATKIN (*to RASPASHONKOV*): It looks to me as if he has already betrayed us. I can see it in his eyes. Look out, Raspashonkov, there is going to be hot work . . .

(*An orchestra marches in. Each of the musicians has an automatic rifle slung across his back. The hefty DRUM MAJOR steps out of the ranks and salutes the COLONEL.*)

DRUM MAJOR: Herr Colonel, the orchestra of the 137th Infantry Regiment awaits your command.

GERLACH: Take your seats in the balcony. When I wave my handkerchief, play a flourish. Play your best, drum major. Your music will be sound-recorded and sent to Berlin.

DRUM MAJOR: I will do my best, Herr Colonel. (*Orchestra arranges itself on the balcony.*)

KRASHKE: Muzhiks, listen to me! You are now going to be photographed for the cinema. Our operator will record the scene of your happy meeting with your newly-returned master. As soon as Herr Zhikharev appears on that staircase you will greet him with smiles, and not with the sullen looks I see on your faces now. You (*turns to SHCHUSS*) will present this bread and salt to Herr Zhikharev—you will fall on your knees before him. . . . (*Hands over the dish with the bread and salt to SHCHUSS.*) Is that clear?

SHCHUSS: Quite clear. There is nothing hard to understand about that.

BRUNO WOLF (*clapping his hands*): Now then, get ready! We are now about to begin. (*Calls up to the balcony.*) Herr Zhikharev! (*To his assistant.*) Willy, turn the light on to the staircase!

KRASHKE: Let us have a march, drum major! (*The orchestra strikes up a stirring military march. The staircase is flooded with a glaring bluish light.*)

KRASHKE: Why is Zhikharev so slow? (*Shouts.*) Herr Leutenant! (*In the glare of the Klieg lights and to the sound of the music, EFIM KLEVTSOV appears on the staircase. He slowly descends, slightly swaying, huge, with long arms that look like roots.*)

KRASHKE: Efim, where is your master?

KLEVTSOV: Don't expect him, your honor, he is not coming . . .

KRASHKE: Why, what's the matter with him?

KLEVTSOV: I made the mistake of not suffocating him when he was still a tiny cub . . . But I have corrected that mistake now . . . I have put an end to him, may his soul rest in peace! . . . (*Crosses himself.*)

KRASHKE: He has murdered him! Scoundrel! Arrest him!

KLEVTSOV (*trying to make his voice heard above the din*): Farewell, honest men and women! Farewell, collective farmers! Efim will die an honest man, not a lackey. Farewell villagers!

KASATKIN (*to RASPASHONKOV*): It's time to begin. We can't wait any longer for the rocket. We must begin at once, before the soldiers come in . . .

RASPASHONKOV: It's seven o'clock and no rocket yet. Evidently, something has happened to Yakutovich.

KASATKIN: We will start all the same. We will kill off the headquarters staff, and that will be something at least. (*Shouts.*) Hurrah! . . . Kill the Nazis! . . . Collective farmers, women, help us! Old men, at them! Kill the Nazis! For Stalin, hurrah! . . .

(*He pulls out a revolver and dashes at the Germans. Old men, women and children follow, howling, after him. Several guerrillas pounce on the COLONEL. KRASHKE coolly takes aim at KASATKIN, but one of the women trips him up from behind and he falls. The woman, shrieking, seizes him by the hair, and then, sitting astride of him, strikes him in the face, bobbing up and down as though on horse-*

back and shouting something in measure. SHCHUSS is engaged in a hand-to-hand scuffle with BRUNO WOLF, who pours out a stream of German abuse in his fury. KASATKIN dashes at the COLONEL and fires at him. The COLONEL falls wounded, but as he falls, he waves his handkerchief and cries to the orchestra in the balcony: "Musicians, play the flourish!" The musicians cast aside their instruments, seize their automatic rifles and rush down the staircase, their iron-shod boots making a loud clatter above the general din. German soldiers come pouring in through the doors, attracted by the noise. On seeing them, KASATKIN cries to ZABUDKO.)

KASATKIN: Petya, put the lights out! The lamps! Smash them! Quick! . . . the lamps!

ZABUDKO: Right you are! . . . Hold on, Stephen! (*He seizes the heavy camera tripod, and, swinging it with all his might, smashes the Klieg lights. There is a shattering of glass. Then he fires at the massive electric chandelier. But several Germans fling themselves upon him from behind and pinion him. The Germans overwhelm the guerrillas by force of numbers. The guerrillas are surrounded and disarmed. They are flung to the ground, each pinned beneath two Germans.*)

KRASHKE (*his face covered with bloody scratches*): Well, you damned idiots! You thought you could fool the German command, did you? But the German command is not to be fooled so easily. Herr Colonel, are you badly wounded?

GERLACH: In the arm. The right one, unfortunately. Never mind, it will soon be dressed.

KRASHKE: Permit me to have you carried into the bedroom.

GERLACH: No, Major, I will see the spectacle through. Let it be done with ceremony.

KRASHKE: You leave it to me, Herr Colonel. I will draw on all my imaginative faculties and all my experience. (*Quietly, almost politely.*) Well now, guerrillas. This is your last day on earth. Some of you will be shot.

GERLACH: And they will be the overwhelming minority.

KRASHKE: Naturally, Herr Colonel. The rest will be put to the knife. Not all at once, of course, but gradually, so to speak. Piecemeal.

First we will sever your hands, which set fire to bridges and drove holes into our fuel-tank cars. Then we will hack off your legs, which helped you to escape from just retribution into the forest. Then we will gouge out your eyes, which saw far too keenly in the dark. And, lastly, we will cut off your heads, which are stuffed with absurd and dangerous Bolshevik nonsense. Let me warn you that all these operations will be performed without anæsthetic and with undisinfected bayonets. Well, let us begin according to seniority. Which of you is the commander of the detachment, Kasatkin?

RASPASHONKOV: I am Kasatkin.

KRASHKE: You are lying, you dog! (*Hits him in the face with his revolver butt.*) Which of you is Kasatkin, I ask!

KASATKIN (*his head raised*): I am Kasatkin.

ZYBIN: He is not! I am Kasatkin.

ZABUDKO: It's a lie. I am Kasatkin.

SHCHUSS: I am Kasatkin.

KRASHKE: Silence, you scum!

LISOVSKY: What villains! (*Points to KASATKIN.*) This is Kasatkin, your honor. This thick-set fellow.

GUERRILLAS: He is lying! I am Kasatkin! I am Kasatkin! I am Kasatkin!

KASATKIN: Lisovsky is telling the truth. I am Kasatkin. My passport and photograph are in my pocket. Allow me to get them.

KRASHKE (*to the soldiers*): Get the passport from his pocket! (*The soldiers search KASATKIN and hand the passport to KRASHKE.*) Yes, this man is Kasatkin.

ZABUDKO (*lifting up his head and shouting*): Listen, you old pig-faced, lobster-eyed, bald-headed son of a bitch! I want to tell you, as my last words, that as sure as my name is Petya Zabudko, you haven't got long to drag your fat behind over our land. . . . Our muzhiks will knock off your damned lousy coconut, our women will stick it on the fire tongs and the crows will drop their manure in your empty eyeballs . . . And your stinking entrails and liver will rot in our soil. . . . Do you hear, you lump of dung in uniform . . .

KASATKIN: Petya, what are you up to?

ANTONINA: Don't, Petya, don't! They will only torture you worse than ever.

GERLACH: What is that he said?

KRASHKE: Something offensive, I think; but I couldn't make out all those Russian words.

ZABUDKO: Translate, Antonina. Translate every word of it; I am not doing it out of rowdiness. . . . There is a reason for it . . . They will be killing Stephen, if we don't prevent it. . . . And he is our commander—he mustn't die. Perhaps if I stir them up enough they will start with me, and in the meantime our Red Army men may turn up.

KASATKIN: Antonina, don't dare to translate! And you Zabudko, stop that abuse! . . .

ANTONINA (*to GERLACH and KRASHKE*): He didn't say anything bad, Herr Colonel. He was thinking of his mother and his wife and children and was expressing his regret that he would never see them again . . .

KRASHKE: Why, she speaks excellent German. What brazen impudence! She has deceived us . . .

ANTONINA: But let me tell you, Herr Colonel, what I think in my last hour . . .

GERLACH (*amazed*): Nastya! . . . And she speaks German! . . .

ANTONINA: You think you can vanquish our country at the point of the bayonet? But you are mistaken, Herr Colonel. I, whom you are now about to kill, want to tell you on behalf of the dead, on behalf of the hundreds of women and children you have slaughtered, on behalf of the men and women you have tortured to death—I want to tell you that you are a dead man yourself! Yes, a dead man! You may still march over our fields and drink the water of our rivers, but your body already reeks with the stench of decay. For the bullet is already being cast that will pierce your heart; the ranks of the avengers will stretch from horizon to horizon, and such weapons are being forged as the world has never seen before. Our people will demand not a life for a life, but two lives for every one. They will demand both eyes for one, a whole jaw for one tooth! You will leave a trail of pus and offal behind you, marking the road of death by which you return. But

when, over your rotting corpses, we reach Berlin, be sure that we will not harm your children. We shall not injure a hair of their head. But we shall take them by the hand, as though they were our own children and lead them to kindergarten and school, and bring them up to be human beings, not wolves . . . And that will be the best revenge we can take on you! . . .

GERLACH: Silence, you fool! . . . Soldiers, seize her! . . . Put a bayonet into her! . . . (*Soldiers seize ANTONINA and bayonet her.*)

ZABUDKO (*mournfully*): It looks as if she hadn't translated what I said . . . Well, I shall have to tell them in a way they will understand without a translator . . . Herr Colonel, Herr Major! . . . Hi! . . . Hi! . . . (*Shouts and waves his arms, beckoning GERLACH and KRASHKE to approach.*)

GERLACH: He evidently wants to say something.

KRASHKE: He no doubt wants to beg for his life . . . (*GERLACH goes up to ZABUDKO.*)

ZABUDKO: Allow me too to have my last say before I die. (*With a vigorous movement, he raises his head and spits into GERLACH's face.*) Is that clear, Colonel? No translation needed, I think?

GERLACH: Bayonet him . . . At once . . .

(*Soldiers plunge their bayonets into ZABUDKO. At this moment the deafening thud of an exploding shell is heard outside and a pillar of flame rises. Machine-guns rattle. The loud cheering of Red Army men is heard, approaching nearer and nearer. The window frames cave in under the blows of rifle butts and the massive double doors of the hall are flung to the ground. Through windows and doors Red troops burst into the hall.*)

ZABUDKO (*dying*): Our men! . . . Thanks, Yakutovich . . . But why didn't you send up the rocket? . . . I had begun to think . . . (*Dies.*)

YAKUTOVICH: Hands up! . . . (*To his men.*) Disarm them! . . . Put a guard on the doors and all around the house! . . . (*To GERLACH and KRASHKE.*) Herr Colonel und Herr Major, geben Sie ab Ihre Waffen! (*They hand over their arms to YAKUTOVICH. The Red Army men surround the Germans and rapidly disarm them. KRASHKE and*

GERLACH *stand with raised hands. The guerrillas are released.*)

YAKUTOVICH: Thanks, many thanks, comrade guerrillas. . . . Forgive me for not sending up the rocket and putting you to all this anxiety. A shell hit the rocket box and not a single one was left . . . You are brave fellows. . . . I have good news for you, collective farmers—Vyazovka is in our hands. Our troops are moving westwards. . . . Thank you, Comrade Kasatkin. (*Embraces him.*)

KASATKIN: Don't thank us, Comrade Yakutovich. We are alive . . . (*Points to the dead bodies of ZABUDKO and ANTONINA.*) Thank them . . . our dear ones . . . our own ones . . .

YAKUTOVICH (*baring his head*): Men, reverse arms over the bodies of our heroes. Zagoruiko, Krasulin, and Ryabtsev, you will stand in the guard of honor with me. (*The four of them form an honorable watch over the bodies.*)

KASATKIN (*standing with bared head*): Farewell, Comrade Zabudko! Farewell, Petya! Your record is now clear. I can announce that to you officially in the name of the Soviet authorities. . . . Farewell, Tony, my beloved wife and mother of my son . . . (*The tears flow down his face, but he is not aware of them and does not wipe them off.*) I swear to avenge you, my dear ones, and for each of your lives to take the lives of so many Nazis that the earth will not hold them and will spew them forth . . .

(*A crowd of women burst into the hall, leading LISOVSKY, his arms bound.*)

NATALYA: We caught him, the viper . . . He tried to slip away in the confusion. He got as far as the highroad. He scurried so fast the sparks flew from his hoofs, the mean skunk!

KASATKIN (*to YAKUTOVICH*): This is their headman. Feast your eyes on him, Major.

YAKUTOVICH: What a vile face!

ZYBIN: Grant the request of an old man, Comrade Commander. Although I can't stand the sight of blood, let me spend a bullet on him, and strike him off the balance sheet. (*Lisovsky is led away.*)

KASATKIN: Well, now, let us settle everything in order and then start out—for the regiment. You, Skitneva, will remain here for the

time being as Chairman of the District Executive Committee . . .

NATALYA: What are you talking about! Why, I can't even sign my name properly.

KASATKIN: You didn't know how to fight either, yet see what a fine soldier you have turned out to be. Never mind, you will manage. We will leave Zybin here as your assistant.

ZYBIN: I can't, Comrade Kasatkin. Although I am a civilian to the backbone, I can't stay here.

KASATKIN: Why not?

ZYBIN: All my life I have trained myself to be accurate . . . And we haven't settled accounts with the Germans yet. . . . Let us strike a balance and settle the account. I am at your service . . . But until then, I simply can't . . . (*A huge crowd of women and old men burst into the hall.*)

WOMEN: Let us go too, Kasatkin! We want to join the detachment. We don't want to stay here.

OLD MEN: And don't offend the old men, Stephen. We will come in useful too. We won't be any worse than Shchuss.

KASATKIN (*at a loss*): What a crowd of them! (*To YAKUTOVICH.*) I really don't know what to do with them . . .

YAKUTOVICH: Don't argue, Comrade Stephen. These people have deserved the honor by their bloodshed and suffering. We will take them along.

KASATKIN: Well, if that is the case, then take the oath before we start out. Every one of you, repeat after me—and not only with your lips, but with all your heart, with all your soul: "I, a son of the toiling people . . ." (*Solemnly and distinctly, they all repeat the words of the oath, and the hall re-echoes to the sound.*) "I, A SON OF THE TOILING PEOPLE . . . HEREBY ADOPT THE CALLING . . ."

(*The words of the oath rise to a crescendo and mingle with the strains of music, calling to battle and to victory.*)

CURTAIN

ENGINEER SERGEYEV

A Play in Three Acts

By VSEVOLOD ROKK

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN

By Harris Moss



ROKK

Vsevolod Rokk is known primarily as the author of Engineer Sergeyev, in which the Russians blow up a great dam and its hydroelectric power plant to prevent their use by the invading Germans. Although the dam is not named, it is clear that Rokk had in mind the famous Dnieprostroi Dam.

Shortly after the Revolution, when they had succeeded in driving the interventionists from southern Russia, the Russians conceived of a great dam at the rapids on the Dnieper River, with a series of locks to make the river navigable and a hydroelectric station to generate electricity for power and light. The work was begun in 1927 with the help of American engineers under Colonel Hugh Cooper, and was completed and opened with great ceremony on October 10, 1932. At the celebration the words of Lenin were spelled out in large electric letters at the top of the piers: "Soviet power plus electrification: that is communism." Posters with pictures of the dam, then the largest in the world, were spread throughout the Soviet Union bearing the proud slogan of Stalin: "There is no fortress which the Bolsheviks cannot conquer!" Plays depicting the construction of the dam were performed, and among them Pride by Gladkov and Fame by Gusev indicated by their very titles the fame that the dam had won and the pride that the Russian people felt in it. It was a symbol of all that the Five-Year Plan had accomplished and all that future plans would fulfill.

Nine years later came the German invasion and as the panzer divisions swept across the Ukraine and came to the banks of the Dnieper River on August 28, 1941, the great decision had to be made—to destroy the dam rather than have it fall into the hands of the Nazis. As the German armies advanced from the Dnieper to the Don, Vsevolod Rokk was forced to withdraw to the North Caucasus; and there he wrote this play in white heat, signing it at the end: "Krasnodar, December, 1941." In course of time it was produced at the oldest and most conservative of Moscow theatres, the Maly. Finally in 1943 the invaders were pushed back across the Dnieper, plans for reconstructing the dam were made, and the prophecy of reconstruction made in the play took on a new promise of fulfillment.

H. W. L. D.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

SERGEYEV, NIKOLAI YEMELYANOVICH, aged 47, director of an electric power plant

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA, aged 40, his wife

BORIS, aged 21, their son, a tankist

SHUROCHKA (ALEXANDRA NIKOLAEVNA), aged 19, their daughter

TALKIN, PAVEL PETROVICH, aged 47, an engineer

PYZHIK, TARAS NIKANOROVICH, aged 45, electrician at the power plant

NINA, aged 18, his daughter, a technician at the hydroelectric station

SUROVTSEV, ANDREI ANDREYEVICH, aged 35, chief of the District Headquarters of the N.K.V.D. (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs), Senior Lieutenant in the State Security Service

VOLOSHIN, VLADIMIR MIKHAILOVICH, aged 30, secretary of the Party Committee at the power plant

PAVEL, aged 22, electrician at the power plant

VERA, aged 25, secretary to the director

RYNZIN, KORNEI PETROVICH, aged 55, Board Chairman of the Red Dawn Collective Farm

TATYANA VASILYEVNA, aged 40, his wife

NILA, aged 17, their daughter

KOVAL, aged 35, bookkeeper of the collective farm

SOIKIN, MIKHAIL, aged 30, agronomist, lame

SANKA, aged 15, a boy from the collective farm

UNCLE ANTON, aged 45, collective farmer and guerrilla fighter

A woman collective farmer

Member of the N.K.V.D. staff

VON KLEISTENGARTEN, aged 55, a German Army general

KRIEGER, aged 28, lieutenant in the German Army

GUNTHER, aged 35, captain in the German Army

A noncommissioned officer in the German Army

Workers, collective farmers, Red Army men, guerrilla fighters

German soldiers and officers

Time of Action, July–September, 1941. *Place of Action*: Act I, Scene 1—Apartment of the Director of the Power Plant. Scene 2—Red Dawn Collective Farm near the German Front. Act. II, Scene 1—Lake above the Dam; Moonlight. Scene 2—Director's Office. Scene 3—Room of the Director's Daughter. Act III, Scene 1—Control Room of the Power Plant. Scene 2—Generator Room of the Power Plant.

ENGINEER SERGEYEV

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

Dining-room in the apartment of the director of the power plant. Two doors, one leading into the study, the other into the entry hall. Evening. SHUROCHKA lies on the couch, a book in her hand. NATALIA SEMYONOVNA is clearing the dishes from the table. The doorbell rings.

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Shurochka, the bell! It's probably Nina. Open the door.

SHUROCHKA: O.K.! (*Runs into the entry hall, from which a hum of conversation can be heard. She returns.*) Mama! A telegram!

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA (*excited*): From Boris?

SHUROCHKA: I don't know! Maybe!

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Quick, read it!

SHUROCHKA: "Graduated ahead schedule. Will be home few hours enroute. Arriving 5th. Love kisses. Boris."

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Heavens, what a fright it gave me! I thought that something had happened to him. Here, wait a minute! Today is the 5th. Why, he may be home at any moment now. . . .

SHUROCHKA: I'll show the telegram to Dad. (*Runs into the study. The doorbell rings. SHUROCHKA rushes out of the study into the hall. She is followed headlong by NATALIA SEMYONOVNA.*) Boris! It must be Boris!

(*SERGEYEV, the telegram in his hand, comes out of the study, accompanied by VOLOSHIN.*)

NINA (*clad in her worker's overalls, holding a tool-kit*): Please excuse my costume, Natalia Semyonovna, but I've come here straight from work.

SHUROCHKA (*clasping NINA around the waist and twirling her around the room*): Boris is coming! He's sent a telegram!

NINA (*breaking away from SHUROCHKA's embrace*): Shurka, let me go, you'll get yourself all dirty. When is he arriving?

SHUROCHKA: Today!

SERGEYEV: The train was due a couple of hours ago, but it's behind schedule. Mother! How about preparing something to eat? (*Rereads the telegram.*) "Be home few hours enroute." He's evidently leaving for the front. (*A pause.*) Well, girls! It's up to you to see that he gets a proper reception!

NINA: Uncle Kolya, I'll run home and change right away!

SERGEYEV: That's right, Ninochka! Your costume really—well—(*Exit NINA. NATALIA SEMYONOVNA begins setting the table.*) Lieutenant of the armored troops. Ever since he was a young shaver he always dreamed of becoming a tankist. And here he is jumping right from the school bench into battle! I don't think he'll disappoint us!

VOLOSHIN: He's plucky enough. Remember, how he pulled Nina out of the whirlpool at the dam year before last?

SERGEYEV: Of course, I remember! And I remember how when he was still a youngster, he used to . . .

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Oh, there you go again, Dad! He'll speak about Boris for hours on end, Tovarisch Voloshin; at home here we can't get a word out of him on any other subject.

SERGEYEV (*good-naturedly*): There, there, Mother, don't shame me! I confess I've got a weak spot in my heart for Boris.

SHUROCHKA: And for me, Dad?

SERGEYEV: And a weakness for you, too!

SHUROCHKA: And which of the two weaknesses is greater?

SERGEYEV: I've never measured them, Shurochka! There's no instrument yet been invented which would gauge human weaknesses.

VOLOSHIN: Human weaknesses are gauged by the things people do under the influence of their weaknesses.

SERGEYEV: Quite right! Hm, yes. But what was it you and I were talking about?

VOLOSHIN: People. We haven't enough people at the power station.

SERGEYEV: Yes! It's the war! The day before yesterday I had a telephone conversation on this subject with our "Energo" manager. He's promised to let us have some more workers. We'll have to wait, but meanwhile we must pep up those that we have. The staff isn't a bad one, and it's up to us to make them understand that war demands sacrifice and the straining of all our efforts.

VOLOSHIN: Yesterday, I called an open Party meeting. You were away in town, but I couldn't put it off any longer. We read Stalin's speech. Swell speech! They all listened as if they wanted to memorize it as I read. When Stalin said, "My words are addressed to you, dear friends!" I felt things happening to me.

SHUROCHKA (*with warmth*): Me too, Tovarisch Voloshin!

SERGEYEV: After this speech somehow I felt easier—surer that the Fascist dogs'd be licked and we'd come out the winners.

VOLOSHIN: Did you ever doubt it?

SERGEYEV: No! Not exactly, but something seemed to be gnawing inside my heart. At first, I couldn't grasp the situation. It was all so unexpected: the sudden onslaught, the withdrawal of our troops . . . and then Stalin made everything clear—just what had happened, why, what is to be done in the future, and the results we can expect.

VOLOSHIN: Precisely! A lot of people came to the meeting yesterday. The general mood was very stimulating! Pyzhik took the floor and said: "We'll blow the station to smithereens before we'll see it in the hands of the enemy!"

SERGEYEV: Here, wait a minute! Why should we blow up the station?

VOLOSHIN: What do you mean—why? If the Germans get here?

SERGEYEV (*rising to his feet in agitation*): Good Lord, my dear fellow, how can you say such a thing, and after Stalin's speech? Why, we'll drive out every single German, to the last man!

VOLOSHIN: That goes without saying. But when? That's the question! And it's not such a simple one. If the need rises, we'll have to blow up the station. Especially after what Stalin said in his speech. Have you a newspaper with the speech handy?

SHUROCHKA: Yes. I'll bring it. (*Goes into the study.*)

SERGEYEV: It never entered my mind that we might have to destroy the plant! And what a plant! No, no! It's impossible!

SHUROCHKA (*returning with a newspaper*): Here's the paper, To-varisch Voloshin.

VOLOSHIN: Thanks! Here, let's find the place where he speaks of this. It won't do any harm to read it over again. Here it is. Listen: "Thus the issue is one of life and death for the Soviet State, for the peoples of the U.S.S.R.; the issue is whether the peoples of the Soviet Union shall remain free or fall into slavery." You understand? Listen further: "The Soviet people must realize this and abandon all heedlessness; they must mobilize themselves and reorganize all their work on new wartime bases. When there can be no mercy to the enemy."

Well put: "No mercy to the enemy."

And further: "In case of a forced retreat of Red Army units, all rolling stock must be evacuated; the enemy must not be left a single engine, a single railway car, not a single pound of grain or gallon of fuel. . . .

"All valuable property, including non-ferrous metals, grain and fuel that cannot be withdrawn, must be destroyed without fail."

Hear that: "must be destroyed without fail." And yet you say: "Why destroy the station?"

SERGEYEV: You didn't understand me! (*Thoughtfully.*) Blow up such a station?! If need be, of course we'll blow it up. But my mind simply refuses to admit such a possibility.

VOLOSHIN: I also hope that things will turn out all right, but we must be prepared for all contingencies.

(*The doorbell rings. SHUROCHKA dashes into the entrance hall, from which her voice is heard in shrill tones: "Borinka! Darling! Oo-ooh—how handsome you look!" Everyone rises. BORIS and SHUROCHKA appear at the door with their arms around each other. BORIS is wearing the leather uniform and helmet of the tank troops.*)

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA (*rushes to BORIS*): Borinka! My own darling boy! (*Tearfully she embraces and kisses BORIS.*)

BORIS: There, now, Mumsy! Don't upset yourself! Everything's O.K.!

SERGEYEV (*trying to speak calmly*): Zdravstvui, Boris! (*Stretches out his hand, then embraces and kisses him.*)

BORIS: Zdravstvui, Dad!

VOLOSHIN: Zdravstvui, Borya! Recognize me?

BORIS: Of course, I do, Tovarisch Voloshin! It was you who accepted me from the Komsomol as a Party candidate. You don't forget a thing like that!

SERGEYEV: Why is everyone standing up? Come on, Boris, take off your coat! Sit down, Tovarisch! And now, Boris, tell us all about it—how, why, when, and where.

(BORIS removes his coat and helmet and they all seat themselves at the table. NATALIA SEMYONOVNA bustles around preparing supper.)

BORIS: Dad, did you hear Stalin's speech?

SERGEYEV: What do you think? Of course, I did. Heard it and read it.

BORIS: We heard it at military school. Some speech! It was on the very day we were all graduated ahead of time. We were lined up in formation, the order was read appointing us to active service, and a couple of hours later we were already boarding a troop-train. There were two trains. I was on the first and that's how I got this few hours' furlough to come home and see you all. I asked permission of the officer in charge of the troop-train, on the understanding that I was to catch up with the rest by joining the second train.

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Then you'll stay here until morning, at least, won't you, Borinka?

BORIS: I'm sorry, Mumsy, but our train was late, and I'll have to leave much earlier. (*Glancing at his watch.*) I've only got about an hour left.

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA (*raising her hands in dismay*): Only one hour? Maybe you can arrange to stay just a little bit longer! After all, it's a year since we've seen you!

BORIS (*laughing tenderly*): How can I, Mum?

SERGEYEV: You mustn't forget he's in the army now, Mother!

BORIS: Mustn't be late. Got to help give the Fritzes the licking that's coming to them. We've got the tanks that can do it, all right!

SERGEYEV: I propose a toast, Tovarisch! (*Rises, wineglass in hand.*) Here's to driving the Fascist pests off our soil as quickly as possible. We Russians aren't the sort to submit to German slavery. Hitler's Fascist Germany must and will be smashed. Here's a toast, Tovarisch, to our loved Red Army! Boris, to your health!

BORIS: Thanks, Dad! I won't disappoint you—or the Red Army, or Stalin.

SHUROCHKA (*raising her wineglass*): Here's to victory! (*She blushes with confusion and resumes her seat. All laugh.*)

VOLOSHIN: You said, Natalia Semyonovna, that you can't ever get a word out of Nikolai Yemelyanovich! Not a bad toast he made just now!

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: But still, he ended up his speech with Boris's health! Again showing signs of his weakness. (*All laugh.*)

BORIS: And how are you all getting along here? How's Pyzhik?

SHUROCHKA (*already a little giddy from the wine*): Borka! Why beat about the bush? It's not Pyzhik you're interested in, but Nina; so why don't you say so?

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Good gracious, Shurochka, what's come over you? Why Nina?

SERGEYEV: And why not Nina? Nina's a very nice girl indeed!

BORIS: It is precisely about Tovarisch Pyzhik that I'm asking. As for Nina, I'll speak about her another time. I'm not asking after Pavlusha, am I?

SHUROCHKA: Borka! What's Pavlusha got to do with it? I don't understand you! Nina has gone to change her clothes. Soon as she heard you were arriving she dashed off home. I'll go get her. What's she thinking of anyway, spending so much time dolling up as though she were going to a ball! (*Exit.*)

VOLOSHIN: Boris hasn't got anything on Shura when it comes to pep. Flares up like a box of matches!

PAVEL (*at the door*): May I come in?

SERGEYEV: Ha, Pavlusha! Speak of the devil! How did you manage to get in without ringing the bell?

PAVEL: I happened to be passing and I saw the street door ajar. So I thought I'd drop in.

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Shurochka must have forgotten to close it.

SERGEYEV: Come in, Pavel, and take a seat. You see, Boris has arrived to visit us.

PAVEL (*greets BORIS and NATALIA SEMYONOVNA*): Is . . . Isn't Alexandra Nikolaevna in?

SERGEYEV (*jokingly*): Alexandra Nikolaevna's run out to fetch Ninochka Pyzhik.

PAVEL: Oh! Then I'll be going! Maybe I'll meet her along the road.

SERGEYEV: Go on with you! Sit down and wait; she'll soon be back.

PAVEL: That's quite right, but I think I'd better be going, Nikolai Yemelyanovich. (*Exit.*)

SERGEYEV: Funny fellow! Still running after Shurochka. It annoys her to death, but he never takes offense. A splendid worker, Pavel!—worth his weight in gold. That's why we've had him exempted from military service. We couldn't get along without him at the plant.

(SHUROCHKA *enters, followed by PYZHİK and NINA. PAVEL trails despondently in their wake.*)

SHUROCHKA: Here we are! Some job dragging Nina away from the mirror!

NINA: Shurochka! How dare you!

BORIS (*rises to his feet and greets them*): Zdravstvuite, Tovarisch Pyzhik; very pleased to see you, Zdravstvuite, Nina!

PYZHIK: My, just look how he's grown! Eh? Ninka, just look at him! How he's grown up! A real hero!

SERGEYEV: Sit down, Tovarisch. (*All resume their seats.*) The tallest glass for Taras Nikanorovich, as penalty for being late!

PYZHIK: For such an occasion as this I don't mind the tallest. (*Takes the glass from NATALIA SEMYONOVNA.*) What am I supposed to drink to?

SERGEYEV: To the Red Army!

SHUROCHKA: To our victory!

VOLOSHIN: Drink to Boris's health!

PYZHIK: When we've driven out those blasted Germans we'll drink the varnish off our stomachs, eh, Boris? But now (*turning serious*)—

well, here I now drink to our valiant Red Army, so heroically fighting the Fascist brutes; here's to our victory and to the health of our young friend here, the intrepid tankist Boris!

ALL: Hurrah!

PAVEL: Here's to the health of Alexandra Nikolaevna!

SHUROCHKA (*with vexation*): Oh, for goodness' sake, Pavel. I'm not on the program!

(PAVEL becomes confused, gulps down his wine, chokes and sits down in a coughing spell. The doorbell rings.)

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Whoever can that be? See who it is, Shurochka.

(Exit SHUROCHKA, who quickly returns.)

SHUROCHKA: Dad, an engineer by the name of Talkin wants to see you!

SERGEYEV: Tell him to come in!

(Exit SHUROCHKA, returning with TALKIN.)

TALKIN: I want to speak to Tovarisch Sergeyev, the Director of the power station.

SERGEYEV (*rising*): What can I do for you?

TALKIN: I'm Engineer Talkin, assigned for duty at your plant by the "Energo" administration offices. I ventured to call at your apartment because I don't know to whom to apply in regard to finding a place to put up, at least for the night.

SERGEYEV: Ah, Tovarisch Talkin. Please come into my study and we'll talk it over.

(They go into the study. The guests rise from their seats, thank NATALIA SEMYONOVNA, and break up into pairs: PYZHIK and VOLOSHIN, BORIS and NINA, while PAVEL trails after SHUROCHKA. NATALIA SEMYONOVNA busies herself clearing the table.)

PAVEL: Alexandra Nikolaevna! Why are you always angry with me?

SHUROCHKA: Because you're always barging in at the wrong place. Tonight, for instance, everyone was drinking to the Red Army, and you come out with: "Here's to the health of Alexandra Nikolaevna!"

PAVEL: Alexandra Nikolaevna! But it came from the bottom of my

heart, Alexandra Nikolaevna. Do you think I'm against the Red Army?

SHUROCHKA: Oh, heavens! Just listen to him—he's not against the Red Army! What am I to do with you? Sit down here, while I go and help Mama clear the table.

(PAVEL *obediently seats himself and SHUROCHKA goes to the table.*)

BORIS (to NINA): How you've changed during this year, Nina! I'd hardly recognize you. You've become a different person!

NINA: Better or worse?

BORIS: Better. On the way here I kept thinking about you all the time, and of how you were getting along. I was furiously angry!

NINA: With whom?

BORIS: The train. Because it was behind schedule. I was afraid I'd arrive late at night and wouldn't see you at all.

NINA: We were all so pleased to receive your telegram. You have changed plenty yourself. You look somehow . . . new . . . different. It's probably the uniform that changes you. How was it at military school? Nice?

BORIS: Grand! But pretty stiff. Don't let you out until they're sure you know something.

NINA: Why didn't you write to me, at least once? I asked you to when you left.

BORIS: That's not true, Nina! You didn't ask me to write at all. When we said good-bye as the train pulled out, you simply called out: "Do Svidaniye . . . write a letter, send a wire!" Obviously you were joking. I felt a little sore about it.

NINA (*with downcast eyes*): And I waited so! . . . I thought, maybe he'll remember, and write me. . . .

BORIS: Don't worry. I thought of you plenty! Too bad Mishka Seleznev isn't here. He could prove my words.

NINA: Who's Mishka Seleznev?

BORIS: School chum of mine. Our cots were next each other. Mishka's a fine chap. I told him lots about you.

NINA (*restraining her indignation*): And what did you tell him about me?

BORIS: Everything. Exactly what you look like, your eyes, your hair, and how I pulled you out of the water . . .

NINA: Stop it, Boris! How could you tell a perfect stranger such things about me! I thought you were different! . . .

BORIS (*in hurt tones*): You should know what I am by this time! But what's wrong? I don't know why you thought otherwise of me.

NINA: I didn't think anything about you at all! . . .

BORIS (*unable to keep the words back*): But still, you expected a letter.

NINA (*flaring up*): No, I didn't. You were right, I was just fooling at the station!

BORIS: Nina!

NINA (*dryly*): If I'd wanted to receive a letter from you, I'd have written you myself. Oleg, now, he writes to me. . . . (*Biting her lip.*)

BORIS: Oleg? That young interne who was here this summer?

NINA: Uh-huh!

BORIS (*after a pause*): Hm . . . (*Indifferently.*) Well, I suppose everyone writes to whomever they want! (*Rises.*)

NINA: Boris!

BORIS (*pretending not to hear, and approaching VOLOSHIN*): Tov-
arisch Voloshin! You know, I was the Komsomol organizer at the
military school. Tons of work, I can tell you, not like you have
here.

(SERGEYEV and TALKIN *emerge from the study.*)

SERGEYEV: Our ranks have increased. Tovarisch Talkin is to work at
our hydroelectric station as the engineer on duty. I'd like all of you
to meet him.

TALKIN (*shaking hands all around*): Very pleased to meet you. I
passed through the power house grounds on my way here. A lovely
place you've got. So much foliage! Like a country estate.

SERGEYEV: Would you like to have a bite to eat?

TALKIN: Spasibo, but I'm not hungry. I'm afraid I've interrupted
the peaceful course of family life?

SERGEYEV: Far from peaceful! We're seeing our son off to the front!

TALKIN: Ah, an honorable duty—to defend one's country!

PYZHIK: To give the Germans a good beating. Heaven knows, they deserve it!

BORIS: Well, it's time for me to be leaving! Otherwise, I'll be late.

TALKIN: Then I can go now, Tovarisch Sergeyev?

SERGEYEV: Yes. You'll have to drop in to see the superintendent of the plant. He'll fix you up. I've phoned to him already.

VOLOSHIN: I'll take Tovarisch Talkin over to the superintendent.

SERGEYEV: Ah, that's good!

TALKIN: Do Svidaniye, Tovarisch Sergeyev. (*Shakes hands.*) Then tomorrow morning I'll take up my duties.

SERGEYEV: Very good! Do Svidaniye!

VOLOSHIN: Well, Borya! Here's wishing you luck in the big fight! Give 'em one for me. (*Embraces and kisses BORIS.*) So long, old boy!

TALKIN (*bowing to the company at large*): Good-bye. Excuse me for having troubled you. (*Exeunt TALKIN and VOLOSHIN.*)

BORIS: Mum dear, I'm in an awful hurry! There'll be the dickens to pay if I'm late. And, outside of that, it's bad form.

SERGEYEV: Yes, Boris, if your time's up you'd better be starting. We won't delay you.

(BORIS *prepares to leave. Everyone bustles around him, giving a hand. NINA stands to one side.*)

SHUROCHKA (*to NINA*): What are you so glum about? Nichevo. . . . Our Boris will return—and, what's more, with the Order of the Red Banner decorating his breast! Am I right, Boris?

BORIS (*saluting in jest*): I shall endeavor to justify your hopes, Alexandra Nikolaevna! Well, folks, Do Svidaniye! Soon as I settle down in my unit I'll let you know the address. (*Emphasizing his words.*) Those wishing to can write me. (*Kisses his father, mother, and SHUROCHKA and grips the hand of PYZHIK and PAVEL.*)

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: But Borinka, we'll all see you off to the station.

BORIS: Please, Mumsy. There's no need to. It's too far, and besides . . .

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: But why not, Borinka?

SERGEYEV: He's right, Mother. Don't insist! The longer the send-off,

the more the tears! He'll feel more at ease among his comrades if we're not there.

(BORIS starts to go into the entry hall.)

SHUROCHKA: But Nina? You haven't said good-bye to Nina!

BORIS (in dry tones): Good-bye, Nina! (Shakes her hand.)

NINA: Do Svidaniye, Boris!

(All go out into the entry hall, from which voices and kissing can be heard. NATALIA SEMYONOVNA emerges from entry hall, goes up to the sideboard and weeps soundlessly. SHUROCHKA's voice is heard: "Borka. Write often! Don't keep us in suspense!" SERGEYEV returns from the hall; NATALIA SEMYONOVNA raises her head and pretends to look for something in the sideboard. SERGEYEV goes up to her.)

SERGEYEV: Come, come, Mother! What's the idea? (Unable to restrain herself, NATALIA SEMYONOVNA turns around, drops her head on his breast, and gives vent to low, convulsive sobs. SERGEYEV puts one arm around her and his eyes gaze sternly ahead.) There, there, Mother! Calm yourself! Don't worry. Everything will turn out all right!

SHUROCHKA (from the hall): Boris, don't forget to write, you hear? And look after yourself!

CURTAIN

ACT ONE

SCENE TWO

Board of the Red Dawn Collective Farm in the front-line zone. A roomy cottage. On the walls between the windows hang war and agricultural posters and portraits. At the back of the stage is a door leading to the street. A second door leads to the right.

RYNZIN (goes up to the window and stands looking out for a while): For three days now our troops have been passing through. Infantry and artillery!

KOVAL: What are we going to do, Kornei Petrovich? Once everybody leaves we also ought to be thinking about it, instead of sitting around checking up the results of our work as if there were no such thing as a war.

RYNZIN: There's still time, Tovarisch Koval! As it is, there are very few people left in the kolkhoz. Some have joined the army, others have evacuated, others have joined the guerrilla troops. First of all, we must put the kolkhoz affairs in order. When our people return they'll ask us about them and hold us responsible for the public property. That's why they elected us to the kolkhoz board. See?

KOVAL: Well, I figure this way, Kornei Petrovich: Once our people have gone, there's no sense in our hanging around. What's all this accounting for? Nonsense! Tovarisch Stalin ordered us not to surrender anything to the enemy. If worse comes to worst, we'll just burn up the whole business. So why all this heavy figuring?

RYNZIN: Oh, no! You're all wrong, Koval. In your opinion all we've got to do is just leave everything behind, set fire to it, and beat it for safety. Don't get panicky—that's one of the things Stalin warned us against. Straw and fuel are waiting where they're needed, and if the time comes we'll set a match to them. Meantime, we must wait and see, and go on working.

(Enter SOIKIN.)

SOIKIN (*almost gayly*): Skedaddling full speed ahead, our Workers-and-Peasants Red Army!

RYNZIN: Are you crazy, or do you think you're being funny?

SOIKIN (*offhand*): Neither crazy nor funny. I'm just speaking the truth, that's all! You can see for yourself, can't you?

RYNZIN: If you don't understand what war means you'd better shut up! You were still in long clothes when I was sitting in the trenches making it hot for the Germans during the first World War.

SOIKIN: We don't know who made it hotter.

RYNZIN: That's war: today you're the one who gets pushed back; tomorrow you win back your losses, with interest.

SOIKIN: There won't be any winning back this time. Finis!

RYNZIN (*sneeringly*): And I thought you were only an agronomist.

It looks as if you were a prophet, too! The future's an open door to you!

SOIKIN: You can call me what you like, but it's as I say. . . . The people just don't want to fight!

RYNZIN (*sternly*): Here, you! Stop that! It's not for the likes of you to be the people's spokesman. We know, besides other things, that your father owned a couple of flour mills and that you yourself repudiated him when his property was confiscated in 1930, because he was a kulak.

SOIKIN: It's not about myself, it's about the people I'm talking.

RYNZIN: About the people! The people know exactly what's what. They know what they owe to Soviet power. If it wasn't for the Soviets, we'd be as poor and ignorant today as we were when your old man was alive.

KOVAL: Absolutely!

SOIKIN: But the Germans haven't even arrived yet and already the Soviet power has gone to the dogs.

RYNZIN: Oh, yeah?

SOIKIN (*vehemently*): All right, where is it? There's no Soviet power here. Where's the chairman of the Rural Soviet? Bolted! This morning I was down in the district center and I asked, where's the district Party Committee? Gone! Where's the local department of the Commissariat for Internal Affairs? Cleared out while the going was still good!

RYNZIN (*starting up*): You damned son-of-a-bitch! There's no Soviet power, you say? You rotten cur! I'm the Soviet power here! Let that sink into your brain! Take *that* from the Soviet power! (*Strikes a swinging blow in the face. SOIKIN falls to the ground.*)

(*Rifle shots are heard behind the stage, followed by spurts of machine-gun fire. RYNZIN and KOVAL dash to the window and stand listening. Slowly rising to his feet, SOIKIN seats himself on the floor, wiping his face with his sleeve, casting a malicious look at RYNZIN. NILA runs in.*)

NILA: Oh, Batka! The Germans!

RYNZIN: Where?

NILA: Entering the village. Ma says for you to get away as quick as possible. Hear that? A machine gun! And none of our people are left. Quick, Pa; the Germans'll soon be here, and they'll finish us all off!

RYNZIN: Come along home!

NILA: We can't! There's no time!

RYNZIN: Hm—a fine fix! (*In undertones.*) Tell Mother that I'll be hiding in the underbrush at the Green Ravine. Do you hear?

NILA: Oh! Pa, please hurry! Quick! I'll tell Ma!

RYNZIN: And then I'll join Uncle Anton's guerrilla fighters. (*To SOIKIN.*) And as for you, you'd better watch your step. Otherwise, we'll settle your hash when we return. (*SOIKIN remains silent.*) Come on, Koval! (*Exeunt RYNZIN, KOVAL and NILA, through the side door.*)

SOIKIN: You'll have something to remember Soikin by! (*Goes out through the middle door.*)

(*Desultory shots are still heard. Through the window can be seen the turmoil of people rushing hither and thither. A few seconds later SOIKIN re-enters, in the company of LIEUTENANT KRIEGER and GERMAN SOLDIERS.*)

KRIEGER: What is this?

SOIKIN: The offices of the kolkhoz board, Herr Offizier. You know what a kolkhoz is?

KRIEGER: Ja. I know "kolkhoz"—it is a Kollektivwirtschaft. Where are the people?

SOIKIN: They've all bolted, Herr Offizier! All of them—the Rural Soviet and the Communists. They've joined the guerrilla fighters. I'm here alone except for some women and children and old people.

KRIEGER: Who are you?

SOIKIN: I'm an agronomist. I'm not a Communist. My father was a very rich man. The Bolsheviks arrested him. He died in prison.

KRIEGER: Very good!

SOIKIN: I don't understand you!

KRIEGER: Very good. You are not a Communist. You will help us.

SOIKIN: Yes, I shall do everything I can to help you. There was a Communist here—the Chairman of the Kolkhoz, Rynzin. He's hiding

in the woods near the Green Ravine. Send some soldiers with me. I'll show them the road.

KRIEGER: Very good! (*He orders two German soldiers to follow SOIKIN.*) Wolfe! Schmidt! Geht mit diesem Mann und verhaftet die Person, die er euch zeigt. . . . Now you go. I give you two soldiers.

(*Exeunt SOIKIN and two soldiers. KRIEGER looks around the premises, rummages in a cupboard and finds a piece of bread, which he eats voraciously. He makes himself comfortable and arranges the room to suit his needs. Germans can be heard "organizing" sundry livestock behind stage: hens are heard cackling, pigs grunting. Occasional rifle shots.*)

NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER (*bringing KRIEGER a huge loaf of bread and some milk*): Herr Leutnant! Erlauben Sie Ihnen vorläufig Brot und Milch anzubieten. Wir schaffen gleich auch andere Produkte an.

KRIEGER: Gut!

(*Enter SOIKIN.*)

SOIKIN: I showed them the road. (*Sees KRIEGER eating.*) Herr Offizier, allow me to invite you to my home where I will offer you a nice meal. I have everything you wish!

KRIEGER: Danke sehr! Very soon everything will be here. My soldiers will quickly organize things. We soon will call a meeting. I will give informations for German order here. I appoint you chief of the kolkhoz. You understand?

(*Two soldiers lead in KOVAL, who has been badly manhandled. One soldier reports in German that KOVAL has set the granary afire.*)

SOLDIER: Herr Leutnant! Diesen Mann haben wir neben dem Getreidelager festgenommen. Er steckte das Getreide in Brand.

KRIEGER: You burned the grain. Who are you? A Bolshevik?

KOVAL: Yes, I'm a Bolshevik!

SOIKIN: He's lying, Herr Offizier. He's not a Party member. He's the bookkeeper of our kolkhoz.

KOVAL: You lousy skunk, Soikin.

KRIEGER: Silence, you Russische Schwein! Why did you burn the bread?

KOVAL: It's our bread, and not yours! And that's why we're burning it!

SOIKIN: You fool! You're signing your own death warrant!

KOVAL: It doesn't matter. I'm done for anyway. But I managed to make a swell bonfire!

KRIEGER (*making a sign to the soldiers*): Auf dem Mieting erschossen. (*The soldiers roughly lead KOVAL out.*) Why did you defend that rascal?

SOIKIN: I'm not defending him, Herr Offizier! I'm speaking the truth! He's not a Communist. I don't know why he called himself a Bolshevik.

SOLDIER (*enters, reporting that the meeting has been called*): Herr Leutnant! Die Bewohner sind schon zur Versammlung zusammengerufen.

KRIEGER (*going to the window beyond which, under the rifles of German soldiers, a small group of women, children and old people have been herded*): What is this? Where are the people? Why aren't there more of them?

SOIKIN: As I've already reported to you, Herr Offizier, everyone has left!

KRIEGER: Donnerwetter! (*Throws open the doors and steps onto the porch.*) Rus! Listen to my orders. I am the German Kommandant. Jews and Communists make three steps forward! (*A pause. No one moves from the spot.*) Well? Quick!

SOIKIN: There are no Jews in our village, Herr Offizier! And all the Communists are in hiding.

KRIEGER: That is a great pity! The German Army has come to Russia to liberate the Russian people from the Bolsheviks and Jews. The German Army loves the Russian people; it will give them Kultur and Order. You must all obey the German officers. By eight o'clock everyone must be at home. Whoever is out in the street will be shot. Everyone must work in the kolkhoz, and this man (*he points to SOIKIN*) is the kolkhoz chief. These are my orders. Whoever disobeys the kolkhoz chief will be shot. All the kolkhoz inventory is confis-

cated for the German Reich. Anyone stealing provisions or cows will be shot. This man has burned grain. He will be shot. (*He rasps out a command in German.*) "ERSCHIESSEN!" (*A shot rings out and a body is heard falling to the ground. The crowd recoils and then surges forward. The soldiers keep it back. A lone woman's voice cries out: "Oh, my God, they've killed him!"*) Whoever has bread must give it to the German Army. You understand me? And whoever hides bread will be shot. So! That is all. Heil Hitler!

(*The soldiers shout "Heil Hitler!" and begin dispersing the villagers. TATYANA VASILYEVNA's voice is heard: "Kornei, my golubchik! How did it happen?" Two soldiers lead in RYNZIN who has been beaten up. TATYANA VASILYEVNA, the soldiers keeping her back, tries to rush in after them.*)

SOIKIN (*spitefully*): Well, how's things, Kornei Petrovich?

RYNZIN: What a lovely black eye I've given you!

SOIKIN: Herr Offizier! This man is the kolkhoz chairman, Rynzin, a Bolshevik!

KRIEGER: Ach so? Who from your kolkhoz has gone to the partisans? Answer!

RYNZIN: They'll tell you that themselves, when they drop in to pay you a visit.

KRIEGER: You do not wish to speak?

RYNZIN: I'm not one to wag my tongue.

KRIEGER: What does it mean—"wag the tongue"?

SOIKIN: He won't tell you anything, Herr Offizier! I, myself, will tell you everything I know.

RYNZIN: You snake! After all we've done for you! What a fool I was! Oh, what a blasted fool!

KRIEGER: Shoot him! Erschiessen!

(*The soldiers lead RYNZIN out. TATYANA VASILYEVNA dashes towards him. The soldiers push her away.*)

TATYANA VASILYEVNA: Kornei, my own!

RYNZIN: Don't cry, Tatyana Vasilyevna! Don't demean yourself! Look after Nila!

KRIEGER: Who is this woman?

SOIKIN: His wife, Herr Offizier.

TATYANA VASILYEVNA (*shouting*): Monsters! Beasts!

KRIEGER: Shoot the two of them. The wife must always be with her husband. Ha-ha!

(*The resisting TATYANA VASILYEVNA is forcibly dragged out, together with RYNZIN, through the door and into the street. Several shots are heard.*)

SOIKIN: They've got a daughter! Good-looking! Nice and young!

KRIEGER: Very good! Bring her here!

SOIKIN: I'll do my best, Herr Offizier!

KRIEGER: You are a real German agent. Very good! Ja! You must help us in a very important matter! Sit down! (*Seats himself.*)

SOIKIN (*taking a seat*): What can I do for you, Herr Offizier?

KRIEGER: Your name?

SOIKIN: Soikin, Herr Offizier.

KRIEGER: You lived well under the Bolsheviks, Herr Soikin?

SOIKIN: To tell the truth, Herr Offizier, I wasn't so badly off here. The kolkhoz is a rich one! But I hate them, I hate their whole system, I hate them for the death of my father! In 1930, when they took everything away from us because my father was a kulak, he said to me: "Lie low, Mikhail, bury yourself away, bide your time. The Bolsheviks will break their necks over these kolkhozes. The time will come and you will be master, owner once again!" We had this conversation in the garret of our house! It was a very nice house! There's a children's nursery there now. I remember it was a very dark night. Then we heard them coming to take my father away. I jumped down from the garret, and injured my leg. I hardly managed to escape. Since then I limp on one foot. Curse their souls! At last, at last, you've come. How we waited for you!

KRIEGER: Sehr gut! You must cross over to the Russian side.

SOIKIN (*starting up, and then resuming his seat*): But that's very difficult, Herr Offizier!

KRIEGER: No, that is not difficult. I have sent already to the Russian side many agents. You just have good documents and alles wird gut sein! You agree?

SOIKIN (*after a brief pause*): Of course, I'd prefer remaining here with you. But once those are your orders, then I agree.

KRIEGER: Very good!

SOIKIN: But you've appointed me chief of the kolkhoz?

KRIEGER: Never mind! I will appoint another man kolkhoz chief. That is not important. You are an educated man, and you will do serious work for Germany. (*He reaches for his pocket notebook and continues speaking, looking at the book.*) You know electric station No. 6.

SOIKIN: Yes! It is a huge power plant, about a hundred kilometers from here.

KRIEGER: At this station works an engineer. His name is (*looks at his notebook*) Talkin—Engineer Talkin. You must go to this engineer and tell him my orders: the station must not be blown up. You understand?

SOIKIN: I understand! Talkin must save the station from being blown up before you arrive. He must see that the station is not blown up or destroyed.

KRIEGER: So! You are a very clever man.

SOIKIN: It's all clear! But how am I to recognize him and get in touch with him?

KRIEGER: I have not seen this engineer. You must write a note and appoint a time. He must come to the dam.

SOIKIN: I see.

KRIEGER: You must go to the dam at the time specified in your note. You will see a man smoking a cigarette. You will tell him the password. (*Tears a page from the notebook and hands it to SOIKIN.*) Everything is written down here in Russian. Read it well and then tear it up. You understand?

SOIKIN (*reading the page*): Yes, everything's clear!

KRIEGER: You will tell Engineer Talkin that very soon I myself will arrive at the station. Me—Lieutenant Krieger; Lieutenant Krieger.

SOIKIN: Lieutenant Krieger. I'll remember it.

KRIEGER: You will give this pistol to Engineer Talkin. (*Takes out*

a small pistol from his pocket and hands it to SOIKIN.) When I arrive at the station Engineer Talkin will give me the pistol.

SOIKIN: You mean he's to return it to you?

KRIEGER: Ja! Then I will recognize Talkin. You see this mark on the pistol? (*Shows him a cross scratched on the pistol butt.*)

SOIKIN: Fine!

KRIEGER (*looking at his notebook again*): There is another business. At this station is also Director Engineer Sergeyev. He is a very big specialist—a—a *constructor*! You understand? You are to tell Herr Talkin he must look at the heart of this Engineer Sergeyev. You understand?

SOIKIN: Not quite. What about Sergeyev's heart?

KRIEGER: In other words—what Sergeyev thinks about Germany.

SOIKIN: I see. I get you now. Talkin is to feel out the land so far as Sergeyev's concerned. Perhaps he'll manage to enlist him. Right?

KRIEGER: Yes! Enlist him if it is possible. My chief, Major Linders, has an interest in Sergeyev. He is a very big specialist. "Nur sehr vorsichtig!" Very careful! Those are the orders from Major Linders.

SOIKIN: I'll tell Talkin everything.

KRIEGER: Further! You must everywhere spread propaganda for the German Army. You must say the German Army is a cultured army, that it brings order, kills nobody, gives everyone bread and work—that the German soldier is a very humane soldier. Understand?

SOIKIN: I understand everything, Herr Offizier. I'll do everything you've told me. I can make up the necessary document for myself right here. All the kolkhoz official seals and stamps are here.

KRIEGER: Very good. (*SOIKIN rummages in the cupboard, brings out some letterheads and a rubber stamp and seats himself at the table. KRIEGER goes out into the street and begins shouting in German. A noise, followed by a pistol shot. The sentry at the door stands alert. Everything grows quiet. SOIKIN finishes writing. Enter KRIEGER revolver in hand. He slips it back into the holster.*) The Russian is a very disobedient type! There is no discipline. He must be given severe lessons!

SOIKIN: I've prepared everything, Herr Offizier. With due observ-

ance of all forms and formalities—complete with letterhead and stamp and signature!

KRIEGER: I am very pleased. You will receive an award, and I will give you money. But you must always remember—if you turn traitor to Germany—then you will be shot—quick! You understand? (*Reaches for some notes and hands them to SOIKIN.*)

SOIKIN: Thank you, Herr Offizier. Don't worry! I'm an honest man! (*Several shots ring out, then a volley of machine-gun fire and the detonation of grenades. Two soldiers run in.*)

SOLDIER (*shouting with dismay*): Partisane! Russische Partisane!

(*KRIEGER and the soldiers madly dash here and there. KRIEGER peeps through the window and fires two pistol shots and then rushes off through the side door. The SOLDIERS dash off in his wake. The shooting continues. SOIKIN makes a movement as though to flee, but then returns to the middle of the room, tears off his collar and lies prone on the floor. The rumble of a tank can be heard behind stage. Enter BORIS, accompanied by three guerrilla fighters.*)

BORIS: They got away, the rotten skunks! Come on, boys, after them! (*The guerrillas run through the side door.*) Who's this? (*Goes up to SOIKIN and raises him. The latter pretends to regain consciousness.*) What's happened to you? Who are you?

SOIKIN (*weakly*): Our own people! Friends! Thank Heaven! Och! The cursed Germans nearly killed me!

BORIS (*seating him gently on a chair*): Nichevo! You're all right now! I can tell you, we gave it to them good and proper! We knocked out about fifteen of them! Practically no one escaped. This was probably their advanced reconnaissance detachment. What happened to you?

SOIKIN: I'm the agronomist of the kolkhoz. Soikin's my name—Mikhail Soikin. When the Germans burst in, the three of us here were putting the kolkhoz documents in order—our chairman Rynzin, the bookkeeper Koval, and me. They laid hands on us and began questioning us. We kept silent. They shot Rynzin. He's lying there, in the yard. Did you see him? Then they killed Koval too. After that they started on me. They said: "We'll shoot you, you Russian mug, unless

you speak!" And their officer hit me in the face and knocked me unconscious. See the black eye I've got? And then you arrived, in the nick of time.

(Enter GUERRILLA FIGHTERS.)

GUERRILLA: We've potted another two, Tovarisch Sergeyev, but the officer and the soldier got away. They managed to bolt off behind the grain barn, the sons-of-bitches! Hello, Soikin! I see the Germans have put you through the mill a bit? Eh? That's our agronomist, Tovarisch Sergeyev! Well, we'll go have a look around the village. (*Exeunt.*)

SOIKIN: Tovarisch Lieutenant! Your name's Sergeyev? You aren't by chance the son of the director of hydroelectric station No. 6?

BORIS: Yes, I'm his son. Why? Did you know my father?

SOIKIN: Well, I've never seen him personally, but I've heard quite a lot about him. They say he's a big specialist and designer!

BORIS: Yes. Lots of people know my father, especially in the engineering world. But I'd never have thought he was known on the collective farms, and so far away from the power station, too!

SOIKIN: Excuse my asking, but what is your name? I'm very pleased to know that my life was saved by Tovarisch Sergeyev's son!

BORIS: My name's Boris, Boris Nikolaevich!

SOIKIN: Thank you very much, Boris Nikolaevich! I shall be grateful to you as long as I live. If it weren't for you I'd now be lying dead with a bullet through my head, like poor Rynzin and Koval!

BORIS: Oh, that's nothing! We were stationed not far off, and your guerrilla fighters came running to our unit, crying: "The Germans are razing our village!" And I asked: "How many of them?" They answered about twenty or so. Well, I asked permission of my superior officer, popped into my tank together with the crew, and here we are. The guerrilla fighters showed us the road.

(Enter a GUERRILLA FIGHTER accompanied by SANKA.)

GUERRILLA (*wrathfully*): Monsters! Brutal savages! They were here for only an hour, but look what they've done! It's simply appalling! Here, Sanka, tell the Tovarisch Lieutenant exactly what happened!

SANKA (*his whole body trembling*): Pa's away from home. He

joined the Red Army. I live with Ma and Grandpa. Our house stands at the edge of the village. When the Germans arrived they came straight to our house. Three of them. My Grandpa is very old, and he's nearly deaf and blind. The Germans asked him something, but he didn't answer. Then one of the Germans hit him on the head with his gun. Grandpa fell on his face, without a sound. Then Ma said, very softly: "Why are you mistreating the old man? Haven't you any conscience?" Then . . . the German . . . with his bayonet . . . right through Ma's stomach. . . . (*He sobs.*)

BORIS: The brutes.

SANKA: I shouted: "Ma, Ma!" And the German came after me. But I was standing near the door. I ran out into the truck garden and hid. Soon afterwards Nila came running up.

BORIS: Who's Nila?

SANKA: The daughter of our kolkhoz chairman, Rynzin. She was making for the Green Ravine through the backyards and she met me. (*During this narration SOIKIN stealthily edges towards the door and disappears.*) Nila stayed with me and then we saw two Germans leading her father. They'd caught him! (*Enter NILA, GUERRILLA FIGHTERS, and a group of collective farmers—women and old men.*) Here's Nila herself.

NILA (*pale, her lips sternly compressed, speaks in a firm voice*): Is Soikin here? He's escaped, then, the dirty snake! Tovarisch Commander! The gangsters killed my father and mother! Soikin betrayed them!

BORIS: Your agronomist? But he's here! (*Looks around.*)

SANKA: He just slipped out through that door!

BORIS: After him, boys! (*The GUERRILLAS and some of the women dash through the side door.*) You're sure of what you're saying, my girl!

NILA: Only too sure, Tovarisch Commander! Soikin heard father telling me that he was going to the Green Ravine. Later Soikin went through the truck gardens with some German soldiers, showing them the road. I saw them myself.

WOMAN COLLECTIVE FARMER: It was certainly Soikin who betrayed

them, Tovarisch Commander. When we were driven to the meeting the German officer appointed Soikin chief of the kolkhoz. And he says: "Those of you who don't obey Soikin will be shot!" That's what he says!

(Cries from the group of collective farmers: "Yes, that's right!" "He sold out to the Germans!" "A real kulak-bred varmint!")

BORIS: The blasted son-of-a-bitch, he fooled me! Nichevo, my girl, We'll catch him! And then we'll plug the black soul out of the damned traitor! (*The GUERRILLA FIGHTERS return.*)

GUERRILLA: He got away! We must make up a posse and go after him!

NILA: I'm going too! Only give me a rifle! I can shoot, you know that yourselves! Anyway, I'm all on my own now! (*Questioningly.*) Uncle Anton?

GUERRILLA (*handing her a German rifle*): Here, Nila, take it! You've lost your father and mother. Now you'll be my own daughter!

NILA: Spasibo, Uncle Anton! I swear before you, Tovarisch Stalin (*gazing at the portrait*), that I'll wreak vengeance on the Fascists for my father and mother, for our ravaged country, vengeance without mercy!

BORIS: That's the girl! Come on, Tovarischi!

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

Evening. The power plant reservoir. On the right, stretching into the distance, can be seen the dam with the gate hoists. The tranquil surface of a huge lake, silvered by the moonlight. On the banks are a few large trees, growing on the broken, hilly ground. Benches stand under the trees. A festoon of lights stretches along the dam. In the distance, the twinkling lights of the settlement. The dull roar of water rushing over the spillways can be heard. PAVEL, with an accordion. Near him two young men and

three girls recline on the grass. They are whispering. Suppressed laughter can be heard. PAVEL softly plays a tuneful melody, with endless impromptu variations. To the right of the dam a sentry appears, carrying a rifle. He stands listening to the music for a while and then retraces his steps to the dam.

PAVEL (*snapping his accordion shut with a loud dissonant chord, abruptly breaking short the tune he was playing, rises*): Come on, it's getting late! (*They all get to their feet and slowly move off to the left. PAVEL brings up the rear, resuming his playing. Enter SHUROCHKA and NINA, meeting the group.*)

PAVEL (*in joyful surprise*): Alexandra Nikolaevna! Good evening! Out for a stroll?

SHUROCHKA: Zdravstvuite Pavel! Yes, I've come out for a stroll. It's stifling in the settlement, but here there's a nice breeze from the lake. I don't feel like sleeping. Where are you off to, home?

PAVEL: Yes . . . that is to say, No! It's still early!

SHUROCHKA: Play us a tune, something thrilling!

PAVEL: With pleasure. You've only to say the word!

(*They retrace their footsteps. SHUROCHKA and NINA seat themselves on a bench. PAVEL makes himself comfortable on a hillock next to them, strikes a few chords, and then begins playing. Silence.*)

SHUROCHKA: You know, Pavlushka, when you play, you're somehow entirely different!

PAVEL: Ekh, Alexandra Nikolaevna, if only one could always say it with music, Alexandra Nikolaevna.

SHUROCHKA: That's nice, Pavlushka!

PAVEL: But Tovarisch Voloshin is always picking on me: "War," he says, "people sacrificing their lives, and all that sort of thing, while you," he says, "are out of tune with your tunes." But if you ask me, Alexandra Nikolaevna, music's not only a pastime. Music can express everything you want to say! (*Begins playing. SHUROCHKA and NINA listen.*)

NINA: Here we sit, listening to music. But if you stop and think of what's happening at the front—it makes your blood run cold. So many people getting killed off. Splendid young people. . . . Oceans

of blood being shed. Can't help feeling a little ashamed of yourself. You know, I'd like—to—join a guerrilla detachment . . . behind the German lines. I know how to shoot. . . .

SHUROCHKA: I'd like it, too. Seems as if the war would end quicker if I get into it. (*A pause. PAVEL continues playing.*)

NINA: Does Boris write?

SHUROCHKA: He wrote one letter, giving his address. And that's all. For three weeks we haven't heard from him. Haven't you written him?

NINA: No.

SHUROCHKA: Why not? He'd be so glad to get a letter from you.

NINA: I don't think so! Why should he remember me at all! He's too busy. He never wrote me while he was at the military school. And there's even less chance that he'll write me from the front.

SHUROCHKA: No, darling, you're wrong. It's always pleasant for a man at the front to receive letters from home. Look here, you haven't quarrelled, by any chance?

NINA: In order to quarrel there must first be friendship. There's no friendship between Boris and me, let alone . . . love.

SHUROCHKA: Stop talking nonsense! Why last year neither of you could live a minute without seeing the other. You spent every day of the summer together and now, if you please, neither "friendship nor love." How tragic! Rot!

NINA: Oh, all that was simply to while the time away! We had nothing better to do! There was no one else to go around with at the plant. I'm very grateful to Boris, for saving my life that time I almost drowned. But you see, it wasn't me specially that he saved. He would have done as much for anybody else!

SHUROCHKA: Of course, you little chump! What else would you have expected? Boris is a kind-hearted, noble soul!

NINA: Noble, you say, and yet he told a certain Seleznev everything about me.

SHUROCHKA: What Seleznev? What did he tell him?

NINA (*with tears in her voice*): Probably all sorts of nasty things!

SHUROCHKA (*brusquely*): You'll excuse me, Nina, but Boris isn't

the sort to go around saying nasty things, and least of all about you!

NINA (*rising*): I think I'd better go home! (*Runs off. PAVEL stops playing.*)

SHUROCHKA: Nina! Wait! (*A long pause.*) Oh, I should worry! Hot-head! Well, let's go home too. (*Exeunt.*)

(*TALKIN appears from the direction of the dam. He looks attentively all around the vicinity, glances at his watch, seats himself on a bench and lights a cigarette. SOIKIN enters from the left. After some hesitation, he goes up to TALKIN.*)

SOIKIN: You haven't a match, by any chance, Tovarisch?

TALKIN: Zdravstvuite!

SOIKIN: Zdravstvuite!

TALKIN: I got your note. You are very imprudent. Who taught you, I'd like to know.

SOIKIN: Lieutenant Krieger!

TALKIN (*angrily*): The idiot! That wasn't the way to do it! Well, quickly, what's your business?

SOIKIN: First of all, allow me to hand you this little gadget. It's been unpleasantly sticking me in the ribs, and I'm glad to be rid of it. From Lieutenant Krieger! (*Hands TALKIN the pistol.*) And I'm to give you the following message. . . .

TALKIN: Look here! We'd better move off a bit. Into that grove over there. Too noticeable here. I'll go first and you follow me. (*Exeunt to the left. A while later, from the right, enter SUROVTSEV with two members of the N.K.V.D. staff.*)

SUROVTSEV: You beat along the lake, rounding the grove from the north, and hide at the old barrow hill, near the triangulating tower. There you'll command a view of both the road and the footpath from the grove. Detain anyone who's the least suspicious-looking. Is that clear?

N.K.V.D. OFFICER: Perfectly, Tovarisch Surovtsev!

SUROVTSEV: I'll remain here. Now get going! (*Seats himself on the bench. Exeunt N.K.V.D. OFFICER. Enter SERGEYEV, from the right.*) Sergeyev? Why are you out strolling so late at night?

SERGEYEV: I came down to have a look at the dam gates. They're let-

ting the water through. And as it is we've been short of water this summer. We've had to restrict the supply of power. And what are you doing here? Of one thing I'm sure: you're not out for a stroll!

SUROVTSEV (*grinning*): You're right! There's no time for us to go a-strolling. (*Lowering his voice.*) I've received information that a stranger appeared in the vicinity of the power station a couple of days ago! He's been seen three times, but we haven't established where he lives. Tonight I've placed ambushes in several spots. Maybe we'll catch the bird.

SERGEYEV: It all sounds very vague. Perhaps it's simply some honest-minded person who's arrived from town. . . .

SUROVTSEV (*scoffingly*): A tourist? Or a hiker? And during wartime, too? No, my good fellow, there's something more to it than that. You may be the Director of the plant, but I, too, answer for it with my head. When I've made certain everything's all right, then I can sleep in peace, but not before.

SERGEYEV: That's true!

SUROVTSEV: How's everything?

SERGEYEV: Seems to be in order! The staff is working with tremendous enthusiasm. The only oversight was with these gates. Everyone is in good spirits. You can feel how the people's hatred for the enemy is growing every day. Something unquenchable. But sometimes you hear provocative rumors being spread—like the one that Lenin-grad has been captured!

SUROVTSEV: All lies! These rumors are spread by the enemy—by German agents. And unfortunately some of our people—out of foolishness, I suppose—help to spread them further, instead of nipping them in the bud. As a result, sometimes an honest Soviet-minded person becomes in effect an involuntary enemy, sowing panic and uncertainty. There were quite a number of such people during the first days of the war. But fortunately, the people now begin to understand that by repeating these rumors they add fuel to the enemy's fire.

I've had quite a number of such babblers brought to headquarters. And who are they? Local inhabitants! Of course, sometimes there

are really laughable cases. But some of them are just the ones we're looking for. We keep them in custody, look into the matter thoroughly and then find out—German agents, sure enough. The skunks! How are things at home?

SERGEYEV: I haven't heard from Boris for a long time . . .

SUROVTSEV: Sh-sh! There's someone coming! (*TALKIN appears. He walks slowly, head down, his hands behind his back.*) *Tovarisch Talkin!*

TALKIN (*startled, stops immediately*): Who's that?

SUROVTSEV (*steps forward*): Zdravstvuite! Where are you from?

TALKIN (*trying to collect his wits*): . . . I . . . er . . . Just having a stroll . . . moonlight . . .

SUROVTSEV: But you happened not to be looking at the moon, as you came along.

TALKIN: It's a childhood habit of mine, you know. What's the use of gazing into the sky? Sheer idealism. And by nature I'm a materialist. I always look at the earth.

SUROVTSEV: That's interesting! You didn't meet anyone, by chance, as you strolled along?

TALKIN: No! I was sitting a few steps away from here, on the banks of the lake. I can hardly say it was to enjoy the scenery. I'm far too old for mooning around! I suffer from insomnia. That's why I wander about tiring myself out, so that I can manage to fall into an exhausted sleep just before dawn. . . . Are you waiting for anyone here, or . . . searching for anyone?

SUROVTSEV: No, I'm neither waiting nor searching. Simply asked out of curiosity. Well, I think I'll be getting along myself. So long. (*Exit, to the left.*)

TALKIN: I didn't notice you at all, I was so wrapped up in my thoughts!

SERGEYEV: What were you thinking of, Pavel Petrovich?

TALKIN (*firmly*): About our station!

SERGEYEV: About our station?

TALKIN: Yes! As I strolled along I kept thinking to myself, can it be that we'll have to blow up our station? The front is getting nearer

and nearer. The latest communiqués of the Sovinformbureau are far from reassuring. Although the rate of the German advance has considerably slowed down since the first days of the war, the front line has not yet been stabilized. Maybe—I'm not saying for sure—but maybe the time will come when the Germans will be in close proximity to this place of ours. What are we to do? Blow up the station, or not?

SERGEYEV (*evasively*): What can I say! I suppose we'll receive orders from higher authorities.

TALKIN: But what is your personal point of view on this question?

SERGEYEV: What's yours?

TALKIN: Well . . . you see . . . But please let this conversation remain between ourselves. What I'm going to tell you is absolutely and positively my personal opinion, nothing at all to do with my official status. I'll be candid.

SERGEYEV (*with curiosity*): Of course, speak your mind. I'm not one of your over-conscientious people.

TALKIN: I'm very pleased to hear you say so! Well, then, here's my opinion: you see, being an engineer, I'm used to building, and not demolishing. On the other hand, I'm a Russian patriot. As you know, I'm not a Communist, but I'm an honest non-Party man and I give the Bolsheviks all the credit that's due them: they've done a great deal for Russia, raised it to unprecedented heights. As a patriot I ask myself, can we allow our land, our Russian land, on which this plant is standing to fall into the hands of the Germans? No, never! Then it means that, if the Germans do occupy this territory all the same, some day or other we'll get it back. As an engineer I cannot reconcile myself to the thought that this remarkable plant must be destroyed.

SERGEYEV: Then you are of the opinion that . . .

TALKIN: Please don't misunderstand me, Nikolai Yemelyanovich. If the order is given to put the station out of commission, then I, as a Soviet engineer, accustomed to discipline, will do everything my duty demands of me. But thinking it over, so to say, theoretically, I consider that the policy of destroying valuable property, on enemy-

occupied territory, is not quite . . . shall we say, rational? I can understand when it's a matter of ammunition, grain stocks and fuel . . . Such things must be destroyed without fail, but when it comes to factories, mills, power plants. . . . So much Soviet labor has been invested here, so much of the sweat and blood of Soviet people. . . . You understand, of course, that I'm arguing here as a Soviet patriot. . . . I'm sharing my doubts with you as with an older comrade.

SERGEYEV (*reflecting on the matter*): I . . . I agree with you, Pavel Petrovich.

TALKIN (*gladly*): I'm very pleased, very pleased, Nikolai Yemelyanovich, that we think identically.

SERGEYEV: I *almost* agree with you! But don't you think that there are certain contradictions in your arguments?

TALKIN: For instance?

SERGEYEV: You say that supplies of munitions, grain, and fuel should be destroyed without fail. Why? Obviously, so that the seizing of them by the enemy will not give him advantage by increasing his resources. As you know, the present war is a war of resources. The side whose resources last longest is the one that will win. Am I right?

TALKIN: Yes, that's right!

SERGEYEV: But, then, factories, mills, and power plants are also resources! If he seizes our power plant the enemy will use the electricity for running plants and factories which he has already seized and which, in your opinion, should not be destroyed. And don't you see, that in our own factories, supplying them with our own current, he'll start producing, say, shells, planes, and cannon, which he'll use to destroy our own Red Army! Is such a thing admissible from the viewpoint of a Soviet patriot?

TALKIN (*somewhat confused*): I must give you credit for the logic of your conclusions, but still, you don't take into consideration the fact that tomorrow we shall take back the enterprises the enemy has seized. But if we have destroyed them, what then? What good will the return of our territory bring us? No, Nikolai Yemelyanovich, I must say that you, too, are not quite right in your arguments!

SERGEYEV (*abruptly switching from the subject*): But you've ex-

pressed very interesting ideas, Pavel Petrovich. I must confess that I, too, have thought a great deal on these questions.

TALKIN: And what is your decision?

SERGEYEV: Frankly speaking, I haven't come to any definite conclusions yet.

TALKIN (*sighing with relief*): Well, then think over my words, Nikolai Yemelyanovich! This is a very serious matter. Look!—There stands the dam of our station, what a glorious sight! What mighty power! And to blow all this up at one swoop? No—it's incomprehensible!

(*A loud call is heard from the left: "Stop! Halt!" A shot rings out. TALKIN quivers and involuntarily recoils. From the right, where the dam is, appears a sentry, with his rifle leveled.*)

SERGEYEV: What's wrong? Maybe something happened to Surovtsev?

(SUROVTSEV *runs in.*)

SUROVTSEV: Did you hear the shot? (*Stands listening.*) Everything's quiet! Then it means they've caught him.

(*Two N.K.V.D. OFFICERS are convoying SOIKIN.*)

OFFICER: Here he is, Tovarisch Surovtsev—we bagged him. He says he wanted to meet Tovarisch Sergeyev here.

SERGEYEV: Me?

OFFICER: Yes, you!

SERGEYEV: But I don't know the man.

SUROVTSEV: Who are you? Have you got any identification papers?

SOIKIN: Yes, here they are. (*Reaches for his papers.*) I'm Mikhail Soikin, agronomist of the Red Dawn Collective Farm, Nikolshoe Village, Krasnoluch District. The Germans were approaching our district, and that's why I left. I settled all outstanding business with the kolkhoz board and came away. I want to go to the region of Krasnodar where my relatives live. Here, these documents issued by the board of our kolkhoz are official verification.

SUROVTSEV: Were the Germans in the village while you were there?

SOIKIN: No, by good luck I didn't see anything of them.

SUROVTSEV: You're telling lies! Krasnoluch District is occupied by the Germans.

SOIKIN: I can't say, Tovarisch Chief. When I was there, there weren't any Germans. Maybe they occupied the district after I'd gone. That would account for it.

SUROVTSEV: We'll let that pass for the time being! But why did you want to see Sergeyev?

SOIKIN: Well, you see, I know his son.

SERGEYEV: Boris?

SUROVTSEV: Nikolai Yemelyanovich, please don't interrupt this interrogation. So you know Boris Sergeyev, do you? And what of it?

SOIKIN: Lieutenant Boris Sergeyev, of the armoured troops, was stationed in our village. Hearing that I was coming this way and would be passing Power Station No. 6, he asked me to call on his father. "Drop in and see him," he said; "you won't be sorry. Tell them all how I'm getting along." I wanted to call tonight. And now you've detained me. (*Growing brazen.*) I really can't understand why all this fuss, Tovarisch Chief. You can see for yourself that all my papers are in good order. Tovarisch Boris knows me. There's so much that I've got to tell his father, and here you are, keeping me in custody, as if I was some big gangster, or something.

SERGEYEV (*excitedly*): Andrei Andreyevich, I think really you can let him go. Boris knows him, after all!

TALKIN: Of course, if you ask me, everything is perfectly clear. Furthermore, you should take into consideration that Nikolai Yemelyanovich is eager to hear news of his son.

SUROVTSEV: But why so late? Why was it that you decided to "pay this visit" to Tovarisch Sergeyev only at midnight?

SOIKIN: My train for Rostov is leaving at two o'clock in the morning. I wanted to leave today, and that's why, despite the late hour, I decided to "pay this visit" to Tovarisch Sergeyev. His son asked me to make a point of seeing his father.

SUROVTSEV: When did you arrive here?

SOIKIN: I arrived in town this afternoon, and reached here this evening.

SERGEYEV: You see? He's probably not the man you're looking for.

TALKIN (*indifferently*): The whole thing's perfectly clear!

OFFICER: But why were you coming out of the grove, instead of walking along the road? And why did you start running when I called out "Stop"?

SOIKIN: I lost my way. I'm a stranger here and don't know the road. I found I'd strayed into the grove and decided to turn back to find the road to the station. I took the lights as my bearings. When you shouted "Stop," I was afraid at first it was robbers and started running. But as soon as you fired I immediately stopped. I have no arms, and nothing with which to defend myself. I thought: Let them rob me, as long as they don't take my life. And as you can see for yourself, I've got a lame leg. And when you came up and I saw the familiar insignia of the N.K.V.D. troops on your tabs, all my fears vanished. Do I make myself clear?

SERGEYEV: Andrei Andreyevich, in my opinion the whole thing is perfectly clear! What do you plan to do?

SUROVTSEV (*after deliberating, in a decisive tone*): Look here, boys, take him down to headquarters. There we'll go into the matter and decide what's to be done. Best to be on the safe side! It's not quite so clear to me as I'd like it to be.

SOIKIN: You're really going to all this trouble for nothing, Tovarisch Chief.

SUROVTSEV: Nichevo, that's what our job is. Take him down to headquarters! (*The OFFICERS lead SOIKIN out.*) Please don't feel offended, Nikolai Yemelyanovich. I understand perfectly that you want to hear all about your son. But have a little patience. We'll check up on him, and if everything's O.K., we'll bring Soikin straight round to your apartment and you can talk to him to your heart's content—till the morning, if you like. War, you know. One must be vigilant. Well, I'll be going down to headquarters too.

SERGEYEV: All right! Then I'll be waiting.

SUROVTSEV: So long! (*Exit.*)

SERGEYEV: What's wrong? You look sick!

TALKIN (*striving to take himself in hand*): Oh, it's nothing! This

Soikin affair has upset my nerves a bit. My nerves are simply rotten! Night, a shot, the questioning! And to tell you the truth, Surovtsev made me angry. Making a mountain out of a molehill. The whole thing's perfectly clear. Don't you think so?

SERGEYEV: Yes, that's what I think too.

TALKIN: Surovtsev could at least have shown more respect toward you, Nikolai Yemelyanovich. After all, you're an old Party member, an outstanding engineer, known all over the country. And here he stood, delivering you a lecture on vigilance. Rank impudence.

SERGEYEV: I think he'll soon find out for himself that he's overstepped the line in his vigilance. Pavel Petrovich, please don't tell my wife anything about this affair. It will upset her!

TALKIN: Why, certainly! I won't say a word to anyone. (*The growing wail of a siren is heard.*) What's that?

SERGEYEV (*listening*): Air-raid alert signal at the station. The first alert signal we've had here! The siren on the dam will soon join in!

(*The siren on the dam, very close by, sounds the alert. All the lights on the dam and in the settlement are immediately switched off.*)

TALKIN: It can't be that the Germans would bomb the station?

SERGEYEV: Why not? You think they'll spare it? But maybe it's the railway bridge they're planning to bomb! It's right close to the power station!

TALKIN: That's more likely!

(*In the distance a searchlight beam crosses the sky, an airplane motor is heard. An antiaircraft gun opens fire.*)

SERGEYEV: Quick, we must get to our posts at the plant! (*They hurry out.*)

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE TWO

Office of the Director of the power plant. Two windows. A door leading to the right. A bookcase. A couch. Portraits on the walls, and a plan of the station. On the small table stands a model of the power plant.

VOLOSHIN: Then you advise that the Party Committee refrain for the time being from considering Talkin's application for membership?

SERGEYEV: Certainly. He hasn't any recommendations to back him up, has he? And the highfalutin words about strengthening the Party "in these days of stress and trial" he writes in his application aren't enough. I can't understand why he's taking this step. There's something fishy here. There was something I was going to tell you about him. A couple of days ago, the night when Soikin the kolkhoz agronomist was detained, for some reason or other, Talkin became pretty outspoken in his conversation with me. He expounded a whole theory proving why industrial enterprises in general—and our plant in particular—should not be blown up. All the time he was trying to worm out my opinion on this question. That seems a little odd to me. I think if I give him a little encouragement he'll come out into the open.

VOLOSHIN: Make a try at it. But be careful! Pretend that you agree with him, that you're practically of the same opinion as he. Have you told Surovtsev of this?

SERGEYEV: No.

VOLOSHIN: Then do. Surovtsev will surely be interested in the affair.

SERGEYEV: I'll tell him when the time comes, but meanwhile, it seems to me, it's too early to jump to conclusions. In effect, there's nothing wrong in what Talkin has said. On the contrary, he said that as a man of discipline he himself would blow up the station if the order was given to do so. What I didn't like was the tone.

VOLOSHIN: So I'll hold over Talkin's application for the time being?

SERGEYEV: Yes, I think we'd better, for a while. (*The telephone rings.*) Hello! . . . Sergeyev! Zdravstvuite . . . All right, I'll be waiting! (*Rings off.*) Surovtsev. . . . He says he's coming round right away . . . something very important.

VOLOSHIN: Well, I'll be going. You'll find me in my office. Phone and call me if I'm needed. (*As he goes out he bumps into the secretary just coming through the door.*) I beg your pardon, Vera!

VERA: Oh, that's quite all right! Nikolai Yemelyanovich! Some goods have just been received from the Army-Engineering Department. The chief of the house-service has had the package taken into the storeroom.

SERGEYEV: That's good! I'll go and have a look at it. Please find Pyzhik and ask him to come down to the storeroom.

VERA: Right away?

SERGEYEV: Yes, immediately!

(*Both leave. The stage remains vacant for a while. The telephone rings. Enter VERA. She picks up the receiver.*)

VERA: Tovarisch Sergeyev's office! . . . He's not here! Who's speaking? Yes, he'll soon be back.

(*Enter TALKIN.*)

TALKIN: Ah, zdravstvuite, Verochka! Isn't Tovarisch Sergeyev here?

VERA: No, you can see for yourself, Tovarisch Talkin, that no one is here!

TALKIN: What do you mean, no one? And you. How can anyone fail to notice such a nice girl as you?

VERA: It's a bad habit of yours, Tovarisch Talkin!

TALKIN: What?

VERA: Paying everyone compliments!

TALKIN: First of all, this isn't a compliment; it's the truth! And second, there aren't many to whom I'd say such a truth! It's only to you, Verochka; remember that!

VERA: Stop it, Tovarisch Talkin!

TALKIN: Word of honor! When I look at you I recall the days when

I was young! "At the dawn of my glorious youth I loved a maiden fair!"

VERA: I can't understand your habit of engaging in irrelevant conversation during office hours!

TALKIN: Only with you, Verochka, only with you! I feast my eyes on you and think to myself, Such a nice girl, forced to waste all her girlhood in this station—far from the madding crowd—from restaurants, cafes, movies. . . . What about the two of us taking a trip to town next Sunday? Allow me to invite you, eh?

VERA (*hesitatingly*): Look here, hadn't we better talk about this after work?

TALKIN: Oh, I appreciate that you are at your post now, on duty, so to say. And you don't like irrelevant conversation during working hours. You're a very businesslike young lady, Verochka, so I've been told.

VERA: So you've been asking people questions about me?

TALKIN: Heaven forbid! Why ask questions? No, just listening to what people were saying! After all, the secretary to the Director of the power plant is a conspicuous figure, especially when she's young and . . .

VERA: There you go again, Tovarisch Talkin!

TALKIN: All right, all right, I won't. We'll now switch over to business matters. No news?

VERA: Nothing!

TALKIN: H-mm. By the way, Tovarisch Surovtsev hasn't been here yesterday or today, by any chance?

VERA: No. But Nikolai Yemelyanovich is expecting him.

TALKIN: Ah! That's good! I've a big favor to ask of you, Verochka: phone me when he comes. I must see him urgently.

VERA: Very well.

TALKIN: Oh, yes, you don't know, Verochka, whether anyone by the name of—er—Soikin has called on Sergeyev?

VERA: No. There was no one by that name here!

TALKIN: H-mm! . . . Well, Verochka, goodbye! Then it's all arranged, next Sunday we go to town together? Now don't forget.

You'll see for yourself that Engineer Talkin is able to attend not only to generators and turbines! (*Exit. VERA straightens the papers on the writing desk. Enter SERGEYEV.*)

SERGEYEV: Anyone been asking for me?

VERA: Talkin has been here.

SERGEYEV: What did he want?

VERA: I can't quite make out, Nikolai Yemelyanovich. He always seems to be trailing around after me. It makes me feel very awkward. He invited me to go to town with him next Sunday.

SERGEYEV: Well, and why not? I'll manage without you next Sunday. Yes, and I'd like you to get me a supply of cigarettes while you're in town. My cigarettes are running out, and I can't get any in the local stores here.

VERA: With pleasure, Nikolai Yemelyanovich. Thanks for your permission.

SUROVTSEV (*entering*): Zdravstvuite! (*Shakes hands with SERGEYEV.*)

SERGEYEV: Take a seat. (*Exit VERA.*) Well, how's everything?

SUROVTSEV (*seating himself*): Not too bright. (*A pause.*) To put it briefly—we must prepare to blow up the station.

SERGEYEV: What's that you say? Are things as bad as all that?

SUROVTSEV: It looks like it. We received an order from Regional Headquarters today: to get everything in readiness and await instructions. Did you receive the explosives?

SERGEYEV: Just been looking them over. The cases are in our store-room.

SUROVTSEV: Fine! Now we have to work out a plan and act accordingly. Whom can we call in on this job? The fewer the better!

SERGEYEV: Shall we need Voloshin?

SUROVTSEV: Absolutely! He's the Secretary of the Party Committee! And who else?

SERGEYEV: I'd suggest Pyzhik. He's a man who can be trusted to the end.

SUROVTSEV: O.K.!

SERGEYEV: And Engineer Talkin.

SUROVTSEV (*making a grimace*): We don't know much about

Talkin. True, we haven't got anything up at headquarters to show against him, but it would be better if we could name someone else.

SERGEYEV: I'm not particularly keen on him myself, but you see, our Chief Engineer is on sick-leave, and Talkin is taking his place meanwhile. And we can hardly manage such a job without the help of the Chief Engineer. You understand that yourself! You could never conceal the preparations from him. Better warn him beforehand. He's an efficient man.

SUROVTSEV: Efficient! Bah! Remember the piffle he dribbled that night on the dam—about idealism and materialism? But have it your way! Once he's acting as your Chief Engineer I have no objections. Call them into your office! We'll talk it over!

SERGEYEV (*presses a bell, calling VERA*): Have Voloshin, Talkin, and Pyzhik come to my office as soon as possible. It's urgent!

VERA: I'll tell them right away! (*Exit.*)

SERGEYEV: How's the Soikin affair getting along? Did you find out everything about him?

SUROVTSEV: I had him sent up to Regional Headquarters in town.

SERGEYEV: Why?

SUROVTSEV: Our District Attorney kept pestering me: Release Soikin. You haven't sufficient evidence to hold him in custody. So I sent him to town. All I need is time. Through our Special Department I've instituted enquiries at the front, asking your son Boris to inform us what he knows of Soikin. There's no answer as yet. And Soikin so far remains silent. Sticks to his old story. But I have a feeling there's something fishy about him.

SERGEYEV: But you can't act according to the promptings of your feelings!

SUROVTSEV: Oh, it's not only that! Soikin's testimony is hazy and full of contradictions. He mixes up his dates and can't explain clearly exactly when and where he was before he came to the dam. Small things, but in my opinion, very essential!

SERGEYEV: You know better, of course!

VERA: Nikolai Yemelyanovich, Pyzhik is here and Voloshin is coming, but I can't find Talkin anywhere. Strange, because he himself

asked me to be sure to tell him when Tovarisch Surovtsev arrived, and now he's disappeared somewhere!

SERGEYEV: Find Talkin. And when Voloshin comes, let him come up together with Pyzhik.

VERA: I can't imagine where Talkin can have disappeared to. (*Exit.*)

SUROVTSEV: Regional Headquarters have also told me that according to information received the Germans want to seize our station intact. You've probably noticed that the Germans have bombed the railway bridge three times but they've not touched the power station once. That's not chance! The devils are saving it for their own use. But you can bet your life they'll never lay hands on it!

SERGEYEV: Yes, by Jove, you're right!

SUROVTSEV: You see, the point is that once the Germans have such plans for the station, they'll do everything they can to prevent its being blown up, should the necessity arise. I still haven't the faintest idea how they'll set about it—the deuce take them—but maybe Soikin is mixed up in this affair. That's why I'm so much interested in this Soikin. He can give us some interesting information, if only we can get him to open up. You'll have to be on the alert—attend to everything yourself, trust nobody! I'm banking on you to put the job through here. I myself will be at Factory No. 12. There's no one I can trust with the job there. All the other factories have been evacuated.

SERGEYEV: Don't worry! I'll see to everything myself! (*Enter VOLOSHIN and PYZHNIK. They greet SUROVTSEV.*) Talkin not here yet?

VOLOSHIN: No.

SUROVTSEV: Then let's get down to business, without Talkin. All the better. Afterwards you can tell him briefly the gist of the matter.

SERGEYEV: That's right. I've no objections.

SUROVTSEV: Well, Tovarischi, the point is that we've got to prepare for putting our station out of commission—to blow it up. I'm not saying that we'll certainly have to do so—matters aren't as bad as all that—but we must be ready for all emergencies. This sad duty is en-

trusted to Tovarisch Sergeyev, and you must give him all possible help. Is that clear?

VOLOSHIN: Go on.

SUROVTSEV: You'll have to draw up a plan of work. Everything must be done in the shortest possible time.

SERGEYEV: Basically, there's nothing particularly complicated about the job. I know something about blasting. My suggestion is that I work out a detailed plan, draw up a blueprint, make the corresponding calculations; and this evening we'll be able to consider the plan, introduce necessary amendments, and then start on the actual job.

SUROVTSEV: I agree with you. None of us will lose time, then, and each will have his own job to do.

VOLOSHIN: I support Sergeyev's proposal.

PYZHIK: I too.

SUROVTSEV: All right, then I'll be going now. Naturally, the whole thing's to be kept a dead secret.

VOLOSHIN: Of course! Wait, we'll go together. (*Exeunt.*)

(*SERGEYEV remains alone. He goes up to the table on which the model of the power plant stands. He muses for a time and then begins measuring the model, jotting down notes at his writing desk. Then he returns to the model and presses the bell. Enter VERA.*)

VERA: Did you call me?

SERGEYEV: Tell Pyzhik I want to see him again for a minute.

VERA: Right away. He hasn't left yet. Nikolai Yemelyanovich, there's still no trace of Talkin. I can't find him anywhere.

SERGEYEV: That's all right! Send Pyzhik to me. (*Exit VERA. PYZHIK enters.*) Taras! I want you to give me a hand in a little matter. But I warn you not a word to anyone!

PYZHIK (*offended*): Who needs all that preamble, Nikolai Yemelyanovich! Have you ever known me to go around shooting off my tongue?

SERGEYEV: No offense meant, old man! But it's a very serious matter! You remember we inspected some goods in our storeroom! Little blocks—like bricks, packed in wooden cases!

PYZHIK: I remember the bloomin' things all right!

SERGEYEV: Well, I want you to carry two hundred and fifty of those blocks into the bus vault.

PYZHIK: The bus vault?! But how can I go into the bus vault with all those high tension wires? Besides, you've got the key to the vault!

SERGEYEV: You carry the stuff down there. And I'll come down and open the door.

PYZHIK: But it's sure death, Nikolai Yemelyanovich! Unless we switch off the whole station!

SERGEYEV: Don't be foolish. I'm not contemplating suicide. We'll put on insulator suits. If you're scared, I'll do it alone.

PYZHIK (*in injured tones*): There you go, again offending me. Nikolai Yemelyanovich! Once you go, I'm right with you! You won't leave me behind.

VERA (*entering*): Talkin's turned up at last. He phoned himself. Do you want to see him?

SERGEYEV: Let him come in. (*Exit VERA.*) Well, Taras? You understand? Two hundred and fifty—don't forget! And try to do it unobserved. You'll have to make several trips and they're good long ones.

PYZHIK: I don't mind if it's necessary.

SERGEYEV: I'll give you a note to the superintendent to let you have the stuff from the storeroom. (*He scribbles a note, tears it off the pad and hands it to PYZHIK. The latter leaves. SERGEYEV again goes up to the model and then sits down to draw up a plan. Enter TALKIN.*)

TALKIN: I'm very sorry, Nikolai Yemelyanovich! I was told you'd been looking for me! I walked along the canal to have a look around. A pity I missed the conference.

SERGEYEV: I'll tell you what we discussed! Take a seat! The point is . . . we must prepare to blow up the plant.

TALKIN (*starting to his feet*): What? Blow it up?

SERGEYEV: Unfortunately, yes! Surovtsev said so. A commission has been formed—Voloshin, Pyzhik, you, and I. I'm working out a plan right now.

TALKIN (*reseating himself*): But listen, Nikolai Yemelyanovich, the thing is simply impossible. Such a plant!

SERGEYEV: That's what I told Surovtsev too.

TALKIN: And what was his answer? But there's no need to ask! He'd like to blow up, tear down, shoot everything to pieces.

SERGEYEV (*keenly watching TALKIN*): I rather agree with you, Pavel Petrovich! After all, Surovtsev is not an engineer. He can never understand what we engineers and builders feel . . .

TALKIN (*cautiously*): You think so too? (*Lowering his voice.*) Do you remember our conversation on the dam?

SERGEYEV (*in the same vein*): Of course! I've been thinking quite a lot of what you said. . . . You're probably . . .

TALKIN (*impatiently*): Well?

SERGEYEV: I trust that this conversation will remain between ourselves?

TALKIN: My dear Nikolai Yemelyanovich! You may credit me with a certain amount of intelligence!

SERGEYEV: Well, I think that in the main your arguments are sound.

TALKIN (*changing his tone*): Of course, in the main. Everything is relative, Nikolai Yemelyanovich! As the saying goes: "Everything has its proper place."

SERGEYEV: That's right! As the saying goes: "Know thyself—and keep it a secret."

TALKIN: And there's another saying: "Your own shirt is nearest your skin."

SERGEYEV: Or: "I live so far away, no news comes my way." (*They both laugh.*)

TALKIN: I think I understand you perfectly!

SERGEYEV: You think so?

(*VERA and PAVEL enter hastily. Both are highly excited.*)

VERA: Excuse me, Nikolai Yemelyanovich, Pavel wants to see you!

SERGEYEV: What's the matter?

PAVEL: I was walking along the road, and someone called to me from the window. . . .

SERGEYEV: Who called?

PAVEL: Alexandra Nikolaevna called. I was passing by on the road, and Alexandra Nikolaevna called out to me. . . .

SERGEYEV: What did she call?

PAVEL: I was walking along the road. . . . "The telephone is out of order," Alexandra Nikolaevna called out to me—

SERGEYEV: Can't you talk sense, man? What telephone? I don't understand a word you say.

PAVEL: Your telephone is out of order—at home . . . It isn't working . . .

SERGEYEV: So it'll have to be fixed! Is that all you want to tell me?

PAVEL: Alexandra Nikolaevna . . .

SERGEYEV (*impatiently*): Like a parrot! Alexandra Nikolaevna, Alexandra Nikolaevna!

VERA: I'll tell you what it's all about, Nikolai Yemelyanovich! But please don't get frightened!

SERGEYEV: What? A telegram? News of Boris? (*Rising.*)

VERA: Boris Nikolaevich has been wounded. . . . They've brought him home to your apartment. Your home telephone is out of order and Shurochka sent Pavel to tell you. . . .

SERGEYEV: Seriously wounded?

PAVEL: Alexandra Nikolaevna didn't say. She only said I should go and tell you to come home.

SERGEYEV (*taking himself in hand*): You'll excuse me, Pavel Petrovich! I'll go and see what's happened. (*Locks up his papers in the writing desk. Exit, followed by PAVEL.*)

TALKIN: Yes, unpleasant news! The only son, and wounded. As they say: "Fate but plays with man . . ." You haven't forgotten our arrangements, Verochka? About our trip to town next Sunday? We can speak about it now; it's after office hours already.

VERA: How can you speak of pleasure trips now, with Boris Nikolaevich wounded! Wounded in action! You don't seem to understand!

TALKIN: You love Boris?

VERA: Don't be foolish. He's a very nice boy, but I'm much older than he. I'm getting on for—

TALKIN: Twenty-two!

VERA: Twenty-five!

TALKIN: Come, come! You mean to say twenty-five?

VERA: Next birthday.

TALKIN: Twenty-five next birthday! I thought you were much younger. But since you'll soon be twenty-five, then all the more reason why we should have our Sunday outing. High time to begin to see life. Soon it will be too late.

VERA: Maybe I see more than you think!

TALKIN: There, there! Don't be offended! Speaking in earnest, I'm not a bad sort of fellow. Not in the first bloom of youth, of course, but, as they say, "We can still show them a thing or two, by Jove!" No, I simply want to help you have a pleasant Sunday. And I don't mind saying that I'll enjoy your company too. Say yes!

VERA: All right! We'll go. Incidentally, I'll have to do some shopping there—cigarettes and things.

TALKIN: Thank you, my dear. (*Offhand.*) Oh, yes, was Surovtsev here a long time? Did he bring any papers along with him?

VERA: No! They sat talking for a while and then left.

NINA (*enters, softly opening the door*): So here's where you are? And I've been waiting for you out there in the anteroom. Then I decided to take a peep in here. Zdravstvuite, Tovarisch Talkin!

TALKIN: Zdravstvuite and Do svidaniye! I'm leaving! (*Shakes hands with both girls. Exit.*)

NINA (*shaking her finger at VERA*): Ah, Vera, so you're having a rendezvous with Talkin?! Aha!

VERA: Och! If only you knew what a nuisance he is! Soon as he comes in he starts throwing compliments! "It isn't only generators that I can offer my attentions," he says!

NINA: Is he married?

VERA: In his questionnaire he wrote "divorced."

NINA: But he's old! Fifty, at least!

VERA: In his questionnaire he wrote "47." He's of middle age, or rather, elderly!

NINA: I can see you've been making a detailed study of his questionnaire!

VERA: Stop talking nonsense! What with all your kidding I forgot to tell you Boris has been brought home.

NINA (*growing pale*): What do you mean, brought home?

VERA: Well, wounded!

NINA: Oh, why didn't you say so before! (*Runs out. Exit VERA.*)

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE THREE

SHUROCHKA's room and part of the entry hall in the apartment of the director of the power plant. In SHUROCHKA's room on the left is a window, on the right a door leading to the entry hall. A bed, cupboard, a dressing-table, a few chairs, and a footstool. In the entry hall, straight ahead, are two doors, one giving into the dining-room, the other into the kitchen. On the right, a door leading upstairs. A mirror hangs on the wall. A coat rack, a chair. BORIS lies on the bed. Seated on chairs, near him, are NATALIA SEMYONOVNA and SHUROCHKA. In the corner stands a pair of crutches.

BORIS: Shurochka, please give me a drink!

SHUROCHKA (*jumping to her feet*): Right away, Borinka! (*Runs to the dining-room through the entry hall.*)

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Are you feeling bad, Borinka?

BORIS: No, Mama! Everything's O.K. The machine jolted a bit getting me here. That's all!

SHUROCHKA (*carrying a glass of water*): Here you are, Borinka!

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Would you like some cherry jam in it? Your favorite jam, son.

BORIS: No, thanks, plain water!

SHUROCHKA: Here, Borinka, drink it. (*Gently lifts his head from the pillow and holds the glass to his lips.*)

BORIS: Thanks, Sis. (*Drops his head back with a faint groan.*)

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Does it hurt very much, Borinka?

BORIS: Of course not, Mum! Everything's all right! But it's the devil—having to leave just when the fight's the hottest. There's one con-

solation at least—I'm lying at home and not in the hospital. Lucky break! Soon as I learned that our Red Cross train would be passing our station I asked the doctor to let me be sent home—I'd get better quicker and wouldn't take up a cot in the hospital. Of course, he refused—against all rules of army medical practice, he said. Then I asked the Chief Physician on board the train. He examined me thoroughly and gave me permission!

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Don't talk, Borinka, you'll tire yourself out!

BORIS: That's all right, Mum! I feel fine. (*An insistent ring at the doorbell. SHUROCHKA runs into the entry hall. Enter SERGEYEV.*)

SERGEYEV (*in the entry hall, in a whisper*): Well, how is he? Where's he wounded? Seriously?

SHUROCHKA: In the right leg! He says everything is all right!

SERGEYEV (*happily*): That's good! (*Enters the room.*) How's everything? Zdravstvui, my boy! (*Bends over Boris and kisses him.*) How are you feeling? Like a hero?

BORIS: Anything but, Dad! It's such a trifle that I'm even ashamed to talk about it.

SERGEYEV: Where are you wounded? How? When? Tell me all about it? Speaking doesn't tire you?

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Better let him lie quiet. He needs a good rest.

BORIS: Oh, for goodness' sake. I'm perfectly all right! The doctor says I'll be up and about in ten days' time—even without crutches. There they stand, my "extra legs"!

SERGEYEV (*taking a chair and seating himself nearer*): All right then, tell me everything about it, but don't hurry. Take it easy.

BORIS: Bullet-hole, clean through my hip. Didn't touch the bone. Here's how it happened! (*Everyone moves up closer, and SHUROCHKA seats herself at the foot of the bed.*)

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Shurochka, mind you don't hurt his leg!

SHUROCHKA: I'm careful, Mum!

BORIS: Well, it was all very simple. We'd been in action several times, without any accidents. Bullets spattered on our tank like peas. It's hot as the dickens inside the tank, but somehow you don't notice

it during the fighting. The last time, on August 17th, we were out of luck—a shell hit our right tread and the machine swerved abruptly. Then it came to a stop and there we stood in the very center of the fighting. Our comrades in the other tanks were pushing on ahead of us. Then I decided to have a look at the damage. I opened the hatch and climbed out . . .

SHUROCHKA: Wasn't it terrifying?

BORIS: What do you think? Of course it was! Especially when we went into action the very first time. I must confess, Dad, that we felt pretty rotten. (*Laughing.*) My tongue stuck to the roof of my mouth—like a crankshaft with unoiled bearings. Any moment we expected a shell to land plunk in our tank, and that would mean good-bye!

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: How awful!

BORIS: But when we got accustomed to it, it wasn't as bad as it seemed.

SERGEYEV: That's always true.

BORIS: For instance the notorious German sub-machine gunners. They march along, the butts of their guns against their stomachs firing into the sky for all they're worth. A terrific din, but causing almost no losses. As soon as our chaps caught on, they no longer lost their nerve as they did at first. While the German submachine gunners push along, our fellows choose a favorable position, let them come up close, and then let go at them. . . . The main thing is to keep your wits about you. I soon learned this, and in our third engagement I already felt fine. Honest! I'm not boasting.

SERGEYEV: I believe you, son. What happened then?

BORIS: Well, I climbed through the hatch, jumped down to the tread, and began inspecting it. Pimenov, my machine-gunner, followed me. We set about repairing it and when we'd finished the job, we hopped back into the tank. Pimenov climbed in first; I followed him. I'd just lifted my right leg into the turret when I was hit. At first I didn't understand what had happened. Then I saw blood, and my leg began growing heavy as lead.

SHUROCHKA: Did you dress the wound?

BORIS: Well, it was rather difficult to do it in the tank. Too cramped for space. And anyway, while we had been pottering around, the fighting ended, and the Germans made off. So we returned to our base. It's a trifling wound but I lost a lot of blood. That's why I was sent behind the lines.

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Bless your heart!

BORIS: And how's everything at home?

SERGEYEV: Getting along, more or less! We're shipping all the equipment that can be spared to a safe place, but that's just a precautionary measure. The Germans have tried to bomb the railway bridge several times but they missed it. So far they've kept away from the power plant and the settlement.

BORIS: How's everyone? Voloshin, Pyzhik . . . Nina?!

SERGEYEV: Carrying on as usual, or rather, better than usual. Everyone's overloaded with work.

SHUROCHKA: Nina has asked after you several times.

BORIS (*with satisfaction*): Really?

SHUROCHKA: She asked whether you write home! (*The doorbell rings.*) I'll go and see who it is! (*Goes into the entry hall and opens the street door. NINA quickly enters and immediately sinks down onto the chair near the entry door.*)

NINA: Boris? How is he? Don't keep me in suspense!

SHUROCHKA: Calm yourself, Ninka! A slight wound! His leg!

NINA (*drawing a deep breath*): Verka told me about Boris. I ran here at top speed! I'm all out of breath!

SHUROCHKA: Ninka! Darling! (*Kisses her.*)

NINA (*embracing SHUROCHKA*): Shurochka, I'm so glad it's nothing serious!

SHUROCHKA: Come on, let's go to Boris!

NINA: Wait a second. (*She pats her hair in front of the mirror, wipes her eyes with her handkerchief and then enters the room.*)

SHUROCHKA: Nina's come.

NINA (*restraining herself*): Zdravstvuite, Boris!

BORIS (*trying to get up, but gently restrained by his mother*): Zdravstvuite, Ninochka! (*Stretches out his hand.*)

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Borinka! Don't reach out like that, it'll give you pain!

BORIS: Rats, Mum! I'm perfectly well! (*Presses NINA's hand. The latter looks around for a chair, but finding none, reaches for the footstool.*)

SERGEYEV (*rising*): Take my chair, Ninochka!

NINA: Don't trouble yourself, Nikolai Yemelyanovich! It'll be even more comfy like this. (*Sits herself on the footstool by the head of the bed.*)

SERGEYEV: Boris was just telling us how he got his wound. He proved himself a good lad! Didn't let us down! He climbed out of the tank and . . .

BORIS: Dad . . . A very dull story! Look here, I'll tell you how I met my first Germans. It wasn't really a battle—just a light encounter, without any losses on our side.

SERGEYEV: That's interesting. Let's hear all about it!

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Father! Don't you think he'd better lie quiet for a bit?

BORIS (*looking at his mother reproachfully*): This episode remains fresh in my memory because it was the first time I met our guerrilla fighters and a certain kolkhoz agronomist . . .

SERGEYEV: Wait a minute! Was he lame?

BORIS: Yes, he was.

SERGEYEV: Soikin by name?

BORIS: That's right—Soikin.

SERGEYEV: So he really does know you, then! And Surovtsev doubted it. I must phone and tell him!

BORIS: Wait a minute! What do you want to tell him? Where's that Soikin?

SERGEYEV: Arrested!

BORIS: That's good! Fine!

SERGEYEV: What do you mean—fine?

BORIS: Soikin—he's a traitor! We searched for him for three days. How did he come to be arrested? (*SERGEYEV, overwhelmed by the news, keeps silent.*) Why are you silent, Dad?

SERGEYEV: I must let Surovtsev know immediately! Otherwise they may let the scoundrel go free. What an ass I've been! No fool like an old fool! I'll go and phone Surovtsev right away. (*Goes out through the entry hall and into his study.*)

BORIS: What's the matter?

SHUROCHKA: We don't know. We never heard anything about this Soikin.

BORIS: I'm jolly glad he's been taken into custody. The dirty skunk! It's through him that the kolkhoz chairman and his wife were shot. They left a daughter, seventeen years old, a nice girl. She joined a guerrilla detachment afterwards and I heard that she's a corking sniper: goes out onto the road, chooses a suitable position and picks off the Germans—mainly officers. She's an A No. 1 marksman!

SHUROCHKA: Ninka's a good sniper too. She won first place in our May First shooting competition.

BORIS: Is that true, Ninochka? I never knew!

NINA (*embarrassed*): Just pure luck!

SHUROCHKA: Now, Ninka! Why so modest? You know you're the best sharpshooter of all of us!

BORIS: And what about you?

SHUROCHKA: No, I'm no good! Soon as I come onto the firing line my hands begin to shake. I get too excited!

SERGEYEV (*returning*): Surovtsev was very glad. He asked me to tell you to set down in writing everything you know of that scoundrel Soikin and send it down to Headquarters immediately. What a blunder I nearly made! I'll never forgive myself!

BORIS: How did it all come about? (*A siren begins wailing.*) What's that?

SHUROCHKA: Oh, that's another air-raid alert! All of us here are practically at the very front nowadays! So you needn't put on airs about being at the front, Boris! We must close all the windows. (*She shuts all the windows, switches on the light and draws the blinds. From the loudspeaker in the dining-room can be heard the voice of the announcer: "Air-raid alert! Air-raid alert!" followed by the wailing of a siren.*)

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Of course, it *would* have to be at the least convenient time!

SERGEYEV (*laughing*): Mother, can an air-raid *ever* be at a convenient time?

SHUROCHKA: Of course! Whenever we bomb the Germans and they sound the air-raid alert! Such an alert is *always* convenient!

BORIS: And what do you do during alerts?

SERGEYEV: I take up my post at the plant, Shurochka stands duty on the roof with the hope of catching a fire-bomb, and mother makes herself comfortable in a trench-shelter. The whole place is ploughed up with trench shelters.

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: But today I'm not going to any trench shelter. I can't leave Boris alone. Who'll look after him?

NINA: I could tend him, Natalia Semyonovna. I'm off duty today.

SHUROCHKA: Yes, that's right, Mama. Ninka will look after him—give him some water if he wants to drink, see that he's comfy, and all that sort of thing!

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA (*angrily*): Don't be absurd! I'm not budging from the spot and it's no use your asking me!

SERGEYEV: There's really no need to go to the shelter. So far the Germans haven't bombed us. They're aiming for the bridge.

SHUROCHKA: And if it suddenly enters their minds to do so today?

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: You can expect anything of such monsters! They say that German airplanes even pursue and machine-gun women on the roads.

BORIS: That's perfectly true! I've seen it myself!

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Then what shall we do with Boris?

BORIS: Don't worry about me, Mama! I'm used to it.

SHUROCHKA: But you're wounded! It's one thing sitting in a tank and quite another when you're lying helpless . . . with a wounded leg, waiting for something nasty to come falling out of the sky!

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Anyway, I'm not budging from here! Come what may, I'll stay with Borinka.

SERGEYEV: Very well, have it your own way! But I must be off.

Come along, Shurochka! (SHUROCHKA *slings her gas-mask bag across her shoulder and takes up a pair of canvas gauntlets.*)

SHUROCHKA: I'm ready!

SERGEYEV: Don't be lonesome, Boris! Keep him entertained, Ninochka!

NINA: I don't know how, Nikolai Yemelyanovich!

SERGEYEV: Try it! Come on, let's be going. (SERGEYEV *and* SHUROCHKA *go out. NINA sits on the footstool, NATALIA SEMYONOVNA on a chair. Nobody speaks. BORIS has closed his eyes.*)

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Maybe you're tired, Borinka? Perhaps you'd like to sleep for a while? We'll go into the next room.

BORIS: No! On the contrary! It's pleasant to know you're sitting next to me. (*Silence.*)

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Gracious! I'd forgotten! The blinds aren't down in the other room!

BORIS: They must be drawn immediately, Mum! That'll never do—an air-raid alert, and the blinds up!

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: I'll do it right away! I won't be long! (*Rises.*)

BORIS: Don't hurry, Mum. See that it's done properly!

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Oh, I'll do it properly! (*Crosses into other room through the entry hall.*)

BORIS: Ninochka!

NINA: Yes, Borya?

BORIS: You know . . . (*Falls silent. NINA waits without speaking. BORIS gazes straight ahead.*) You know . . . I've been thinking of you an awful lot! . . .

NINA: And I, too. (*Bends closer to him.*)

BORIS: No, that's not exactly right! I wasn't thinking about you. . . . (NINA *turns away from him.*) But you seemed to be with me constantly—everywhere, all the time! Wherever I was! And when I was wounded I clearly saw you, bending over me, and smiling. (*Places his hand on NINA's.*) That was on August 17th—ten days ago. Didn't you feel anything particular on that day?

NINA: I have been in such a state of torment all these days, ever

since you went away. You were so brusque when you said good-bye. You said, "Good-bye, Ninochka!" and turned away.

BORIS: Ninochka! Please forgive me! I'm to blame. You know, if I hadn't been afraid of missing the train I'd have returned to say good-bye to you.

NINA: Is that true?

BORIS: Honor bright!

NINA: You're joking!

BORIS: Honest, I'm not, Ninochka! Here, let's both make a promise always to tell each other the truth and . . .

NINA: And never quarrel!

BORIS: And never quarrel!

NINA: Then please answer me one question! But tell the truth, as we've just promised.

BORIS: All right! But first tell me—does . . . does Oleg still write you?

NINA (*laughing happily*): Of course not! Last year he wrote me two letters. I never answered them. And that's all. What made it enter your mind? He's such a bore.

BORIS: Honest?

NINA: Honor bright!

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA (*entering*): Well, I've closed the blinds everywhere.

BORIS (*withdrawing his hand from that of NINA*): Sure you closed them tight?

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Absolutely!

BORIS: You know, sometimes a tiny chink from a window can draw the attention of an enemy plane! Maybe you'll check up?

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Don't worry, Boris! I've made absolutely sure there's no light showing anywhere. (*Sits down. Silence. Then a distant anti-aircraft gun fires several shots.*)

NINA: Starting again! At the bridge!

BORIS: I remember once, at the front, we were sitting drinking tea in a village. Suddenly an air-raid alert was sounded! Then we heard a bomb burst right under our noses. When we went out into the yard

we found the cottage next door blown to smithereens. The ruins were in flames. Afterwards we found out that the whole village had been in darkness except for a chink of light that appeared quite by chance in the window of this cottage. So it was exactly on this cottage that the "Junkers" unloaded. (*The distant detonation of a demolition bomb is heard.*)

NINA: That was a good one!

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA (*showing signs of perturbation*): Maybe I've overlooked a chink somewhere? Should I go and have a look?

BORIS: Oh, don't bother, Mum. Even if there is a bit of light showing, maybe it'll escape the Germans' attention!

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: No! I'd rather go and make sure! (*Rises to her feet and goes out.*)

BORIS: What was it you wanted to tell me, Ninochka?

NINA: Oh, nothing in particular!

BORIS: But still, what was it?

NINA: It's not worth mentioning.

BORIS: Then I propose we introduce another article into our agreement; never to conceal anything from each other!

NINA: That's not going to be so easy!

BORIS: Nina, please! (*Takes her hand.*) What was it you were going to say? Tell me!

NINA: Well, I wanted to ask you . . . to ask your advice on a question of great importance to me. . . .

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA (*entering*): No! Not a pin-hole of light anywhere! I've made absolutely certain this time!

BORIS (*quickly withdrawing his hand*): It's really astonishing, how quick you are, Mama!

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA (*chuckling*): I'm not so old as you think, Borinka! (*Sits down on a chair.*)

BORIS (*after a slight pause*): So you were telling me about yourself . . . what are you interested in now?

NINA: Only work. If you remember, I always dreamed of becoming an electrical engineer and was busy preparing to enter the Institute. But now I have no spare time at all.

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: When the war is over, Ninochka, everything will be normal. You'll enter the Institute and graduate as an electrical engineer, and work at our power plant. And Borinka will enter the university.

BORIS: No, I won't, I've decided to stay in the Army. After the war I'll enter the Military Academy!

NINA: I don't think it's worth while! I'm sure there won't be any more wars. Do you mean to say that after such a war as this people will want another?

BORIS: It's hard to say! After the first World War everybody went round saying: "That's the end! There'll be no more wars!" But . . .

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Borinka! I've been thinking. . . . Perhaps you'd like something to eat? Maybe you're hungry?

BORIS: What's that? No thanks. . . . I'm not hungry at all. . . . That is . . . What can you offer?

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA (*very pleased*): Well, a nice omelette, or scrambled eggs?

BORIS: Will that take long?

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Not a second!

BORIS: H-mm! What else could you suggest?

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: I could make you some Hamburg steak—with an egg. I've got some nice fresh meat in the pantry.

BORIS: Will that take long?

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Yes, my dear, I'm afraid that will take longer!

BORIS: All right then, let's have the Hamburg steak. But please see that it's well done. For Ninochka too, while you're at it!

NINA: Thanks, but I'm not hungry in the least!

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: It'll take quite a long time!

BORIS: That's quite all right, Mum. Be sure to make enough for both of us.

NINA: But I won't be able to eat it, Borya!

BORIS: Very well, then I won't either.

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Please, Ninochka, for Boris's sake! Otherwise, you can see for yourself, he won't eat it!

BORIS (*making admonitory signs*): Please, Ninochka, if I ask you to?

NINA (*seeing light, laughs*): Oh, Boris, you're impossible!

BORIS: Hamburg steak is the order, Mum!

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Good! I'll see to it right away. And be sure to lie quiet. Don't disturb your wound. Ninochka, please look after him while I'm gone. (*Exit.*)

NINA (*laughing*): Boris! You're really impossible! Why do you torment your mother like that, making her run around, cooking meals and checking up on the curtains?

BORIS: First of all because Mum's only too glad to feed me from morning till night, and second of all, there's so much you and I have got to talk about! Why is it that mothers sometimes don't seem to understand?

NINA: But we'll have plenty of time now. . . . While you're convalescing I'll visit you every day. . . .

BORIS: But I don't want to wait any more! I've waited too long as it is! What were you going to tell me?

NINA: Nothing in particular . . . and yet lots of things! . . .

BORIS: There . . . you're again breaking our agreement.

NINA: I wanted . . . I was planning to join the guerrilla fighters.

BORIS: What?

NINA: You needn't laugh! When you . . . When you went away to the front without saying anything to me, I decided . . . I'd join a guerrilla detachment. . . . Maybe . . . I'd meet you somewhere! . . .

BORIS: Ninochka! Look at me! . . . Please. . . . Otherwise I'll get up! (*He makes an attempt to rise in his bed.*)

NINA (*rising and making BORIS lie down again*): Borinka, what are you doing! Lie down! (*He takes both her hands. NINA seats herself on the edge of the bed.*)

BORIS: Look at me! (*She does.*) Your eyes are glowing like a . . . (*a demolition bomb bursts near by*) a fire-bomb!

NINA: That was close!

BORIS: Who cares a hang! Nina, darling! . . . Do you love me?

NINA: More than life itself!

BORIS: Kiss me. (*NINA bends and kisses him.*)

NINA (*tearing herself away from BORIS*): Boris! . . . You're like a magnet. . . . I simply can't tear myself away from you! Darling!

BORIS: My own precious sweetheart! (*Draws NINA towards himself and embraces and kisses her. Two demolition bombs burst near by in quick succession, but NINA and BORIS cling in each other's embrace, kissing. Antiaircraft guns open fire, but the lovers are oblivious to everything.*)

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA (*runs across the entry hall in a fright, opens the door of the room and sees BORIS and NINA embraced. For several seconds she stands motionless, then softly closes the door, tiptoes back to the chair in the entry hall and sits down*): There's your Hamburg steak for you! I might better have gone to the shelter.

(*Antiaircraft guns resume fire.*)

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE ONE

Control room of the power plant. Along the entire left wall runs a marble switchboard with numerous meters and instruments: voltmeters, ammeters, colored signal lamps, relay circuits, knife switches, etc. On the right are the entrance door and the table of the engineer on duty with notebooks for entering observations. In the further wall are two large windows, through which can be seen in perspective the station and the dam. In the corner is a radio-transmitting installation with a microphone. On the wall, between the windows, hangs a diagram of the power station. Artillery fire is heard rumbling in the distance. TALKIN is on duty. As the curtain rises, he stands attentively studying the diagram, making light pencil marks on the chart.

SERGEYEV (*entering*): How is everything?

TALKIN (*moving away from the diagram*): Everything's in order, Nikolai Yemelyanovich! The station is running at half-load. At 15:10

Feeder 3, supplying Factory No. 12, was switched off. Within forty seconds the line was working again. Nothing else to report.

SERGEYEV: All right! Anybody been asking for me?

TALKIN: A phone call a short while ago.

SERGEYEV: From whom?

TALKIN: Surovtsev.

SERGEYEV: Pressing me to hurry! He's afraid we'll be late with our preparations for blowing up the station.

(After a pause, the telephone rings.)

TALKIN: Hello! Talkin speaking. . . . Just a second. *(To SERGEYEV.)* It's for you, Nikolai Yemelyanovich. . . .

SERGEYEV: Hello . . . Zdravstvui, Tovarisch Surovtsev! . . . Yes, Everything's being done . . . All that's left now is to lead the cable into the control room and connect it up with the main-switch! Calculations have been verified. . . . The very thought of it makes my heart stop beating. I understand, but it's not easy . . . Of course, I'll hang on till the last minute. Will you phone me? All right . . . Don't worry. So long! *(Rings off.)* He's pressing us to hurry.

TALKIN: And how are things at the front?

SERGEYEV: I don't know for sure, but the Germans are pushing hard on our sector. Pressing forward without counting the heavy casualties they're suffering. Our station, apparently, doesn't give them any peace of mind.

TALKIN: How far off are they?

SERGEYEV: Yesterday the nearest point was about ten kilometers. I don't know how far they've advanced today. Nobody seems to know anything definite.

TALKIN *(musing)*: H-mm! *(Goes up to the switchboard, reads the gauges, adjusts some instruments, and logs some entries.)*

SERGEYEV: Things aren't too bright!

TALKIN: Nothing much to be proud of! "It never rains but it pours!" *(Enter PYZHNIK with a box.)*

PYZHIK: Here I am! Zdravstvuite! *(Places the box on the table.)* Won't be in your way here, will it, Pavel Petrovich?

TALKIN *(shifting the books on the table)*: You might have asked

before putting your box on the table. First you plunk it down and then hope that it won't be in the way!

PYZHIK: Why is it you're always so grumpy, Pavel Petrovich? It really beats me, where a fellow finds so much to be dissatisfied with.

SERGEYEV: Chuck your philosophizing, Taras! Better get down to business. Where did you lay the cable ends?

PYZHIK: I didn't lay any wiring, Nikolai Yemelyanovich! I decided to use a pair of free wires running through the tunnel. They're more reliable; and what's more, they're connected straight onto the switchboard here!

SERGEYEV: That's right! I'd forgotten we had these spare wires.

PYZHIK: And we'll connect the switch right here, on the board.

SERGEYEV: All right then, make it here. (*Points to a spot on the switchboard. PYZHIK starts fixing the switch which he takes out from the box he brought.*) Did you check up the line?

PYZHIK: Twice, Nikolai Yemelyanovich, centimeter by centimeter along the whole length, and made doubly sure by making a test telephone connection. Everything's in order! (*Artillery fire grows nearer and more frequent.*)

TALKIN (*goes up to the window and looks into the distance*): Germans seem to be closing in.

SERGEYEV (*going up to the window*): Yes! It looks as though the front is getting pretty close.

PYZHIK: Damn their hides!

SERGEYEV: Taras, you'd better hurry up and finish the job!

PYZHIK: Everything's in order now; the connection's made. I'll just pop down to the basement and switch on the accumulators . . . and we'll be all ready for action. (*He is just about ready to leave.*)

SERGEYEV: Taras! (*Takes him to one side. In a whisper.*) And the bus vault?

PYZHIK (*answering him in a whisper*): I've not touched anything there, Nikolai Yemelyanovich. Everything is just as we left it. I haven't been inside the vault since.

SERGEYEV: That's good. (*Aloud.*) All right then, soon as you've connected the accumulator, phone and let me know.

PYZHIK: In a twinkling! I'll leave the sledge-hammer here, to smash up the switchboard.

SERGEYEV: Good! Put it here, near the board. (*Exit PYZHNIK.*)

TALKIN (*with dissatisfaction*): Why all the secrets? . . . Like Surovtsev.

SERGEYEV: Good Lord, what secrets? Just a family matter, that's all. Nina is marrying my son Boris, and I've asked Pyzhik to keep an eye on them.

TALKIN: When did they find time to become engaged?

SERGEYEV: Only five days ago. Youth! Who's to blame them! Are you a married man, Pavel Petrovich?

TALKIN (*reluctantly*): I was, once upon a time! She left me . . . went off with another man! And now . . . (*Gives an unpleasant snicker.*) I'm a sort of rolling stone. But I must say it's more pleasant, and gives me less worries!

SERGEYEV: You're a strange sort of a person, Pavel Petrovich.

TALKIN: What's strange about me? An ordinary Soviet engineer, with a standing reaching back to before the Revolution. A little bit of a failure in life, but I hope for better times to come. "While there's life there's hope!" (*Telephone rings.*) Hello! Talkin speaking. Just a moment. . . . Pyzhik wants to speak to you.

SERGEYEV: Hello! Connected it? . . . Good. Check up on the line again and make sure there are no breaks anywhere. . . . That's all right—it never does any harm to make doubly sure. (*Hangs up. Goes up to the switch installed by PYZHNIK on the board.*) It's somehow hard to believe. Once I throw in this switch there won't be any more power plant. When you think of all the time, labor, brains, that went into the making of it. . . .

TALKIN: It's a very painful operation. I can't help thinking all the time, Is it necessary to blow it up? After all, we'll return here some time or other.

SERGEYEV: There's one thing you're forgetting! We are certain to return here, but while the Germans are playing the masters they'll use the plant against us. And the main thing is that when they're forced to retreat they'll certainly blow up the plant. They'll have no

scruples. And the result will be that the Germans will have the chance to use the plant against us and then we'll lose it just the same. No! It must be blown up. And we'll build another one—perhaps even better than this!

TALKIN: In that case we must blow it up at the very last minute, when the Germans are practically at the very gates.

SERGEYEV: Yes, I agree with you on that point! I'll wait till the very last moment.

(A distant explosion is heard. Colored signal lamps begin flickering on the switchboard and the needles on the gauges swing sharply to and fro. SERGEYEV and TALKIN stand tensely listening. A second explosion is heard.)

TALKIN *(looking at the instruments)*: The load has fallen off by three thousand kilovolts. We'll have to stop another generator.

SERGEYEV: That was Factory No. 12. Throw out No. 5. *(TALKIN manipulates controls at the switchboard. The telephone rings. SERGEYEV takes up the receiver.)* Hello. . . . *(Remains listening for some time and then hangs up without a word.)* Surovtsev. . . . We've blown up Factory No. 12. Our orders are to stand ready at a minute's notice. . . .

TALKIN *(with ill-concealed eagerness)*: The Germans are that near?

SERGEYEV *(reluctantly)*: Tanks. *(Picks up the telephone receiver.)* Give me the feeder section! Pyzhik to the phone—quick! Taras? Checked up? Everything's absolutely ready? Good! *(Rings off and again lifts the receiver.)* My apartment, please! Is that you, Mother? All ready to leave? No, I'm afraid I shan't be able to come home to say good-bye. . . . Call in here as you drive by. Only hurry up! . . . No time, Mother; I mustn't keep the phone busy. *(Rings off.)* It's remarkable how the years tell! I'm so nervous that I can't pull myself together. I'm not afraid not in the least, but look how my hands are trembling!

TALKIN: Strange!

SERGEYEV: During the Civil War, when I was still quite a youngster, I was in many a tight corner, but I never got nervous or afraid. I remember once, when I was a lineman for our regiment, I received

orders to sit tight in a village and keep up connections till the very end. There I sat, all alone, answering and plugging in calls. Gunfire all around—but it didn't worry me in the least. Suddenly I peeped through the window and saw a group of White Guards creeping along the street, making straight for me—evidently they were following the wires. I got one of them with my rifle, shooting through the window, and reckoned on the rest scattering, but they headed straight for the door. They had already entered the vestibule when I jumped through the window, dashed around the house, got out a grenade and followed them inside. I saw them tinkering with my telephone switchboard. I was cool as a cucumber—took careful aim with the grenade and let them have it.

(Enter NATALIA SEMYONOVNA and SHUROCHKA. They greet TALKIN.)

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: Father, we're all ready! (She bursts into tears.)

SERGEYEV: Come, come, mother! Calm yourself! I'll soon catch up with you.

NATALIA SEMYONOVNA: It's not that! It's the station. We've lived here so many years! It breaks my heart to think of it!

SERGEYEV: Ah! The station! Well, let's hope nothing will happen to it. But you must hurry. Where's Boris?

SHUROCHKA: Outside, in the car, Dad. Maybe you'll go down and see him? Nina's leaving with us too. Come on, Dad.

TALKIN: Yes, Nikolai Yemelyanovich, go down and see him. If anyone phones, I'll call you from the window.

SERGEYEV: All right, I'll go down for a moment. But be sure to call me if anyone phones!

TALKIN: Don't worry! (Exit SERGEYEV, NATALIA SEMYONOVNA and SHUROCHKA. As soon as they go, TALKIN undergoes a metamorphosis. From a slow-going, indifferent person, he turns into an energetic man of action. He strides up to the door, listens for a second, then locks it. He whips out a length of wire about five yards long from his pocket, and going to the switch he swiftly changes the wire attached by PYZHNIK. He hides the replaced wire in his pocket. Before unhooking the door he slips his revolver from his trouser pocket to his jacket

pocket. Then he takes his seat at the table. The firing continues. Spurts of machine-gun fire are heard. Enter SERGEYEV.)

SERGEYEV: Well, they've left. A load off my mind. My family tied me down very much. Now I'm free to act!

TALKIN (*inquisitively*): In what respect did your family tie you down? I don't quite understand!

SERGEYEV: Generally. In every respect! (*With slight sarcasm.*) Suppose I suddenly decided to remain here, on this territory, what would I do with my family?

TALKIN: Remain here? With the Germans? But what's the object? (*Enter VOLOSHIN.*)

VOLOSHIN: Zdravstvuite, Tovarischi!

SERGEYEV: We've already met once today.

TALKIN: Zdravstvuite, Vladimir Mikhailovich!

VOLOSHIN (*seating himself*): I'm dog-tired! Simply run off my feet! The District Party Committee had everyone who could be spared evacuated along with their families. Some job! Getting the machines, distributing the people, coaxing some, ordering others! I'm hoarse from yelling and explaining. How are things at the front?

SERGEYEV: That's just what we were going to ask you!

VOLOSHIN (*waving his hand in a gesture*): What do I know? Has Surovtsev phoned?

SERGEYEV: I'm waiting for his call any minute now.

VOLOSHIN: Have you gotten the first warning?

SERGEYEV: Yes.

VOLOSHIN: Is everything ready?

SERGEYEV: Yes.

VOLOSHIN: It's a rotten business.

TALKIN: We have to be patient, Vladimir Mikhailovich. We'll get our revenge later! An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth!

VOLOSHIN: You can be sure of that! The devil take them! Ten teeth for one! Have you heard about Soikin?

SERGEYEV: No! What is it? (*TALKIN starts to his feet, a book in his hands.*)

VOLOSHIN: He's confessed! (*TALKIN drops the book.*) When they

threatened to bring him face to face with Boris he owned up to everything!

SERGEYEV: To what exactly?

VOLOSHIN: He said that the Germans had sent him back of our lines to spy and spread panicky rumors.

SERGEYEV: What else?

VOLOSHIN: Nothing. But Surovtsev thinks Soikin is still keeping something back and the investigation is being continued.

SERGEYEV: I must confess that Surovtsev is a man of intuition. He was right. And Pavel Petrovich and I were both boobies. I can never forgive myself!

TALKIN: But who in the world could have suspected Soikin of being such a rascal! His story was smooth enough and the references he made to your son!

SERGEYEV: I'll never forgive myself this blunder! (*The telephone rings. SERGEYEV quickly lifts the receiver.*) Hello! . . . Yes, Sergeyev speaking! (*A change comes over his face.*) Yes! . . . I understand! . . . I'll do it. . . . So long! . . . (*Rings off and stands silent for several seconds.*) Surovtsev just phoned. We've received orders. We've got to act without delay. There's nothing more for you to do here. Leave now, before it's too late. I'll manage alone. According to plan.

VOLOSHIN: And what about yourself? Have you got a car? I'll stay with you, old chap!

SERGEYEV: No, there's no need whatever for you to remain. I've sent my family off in the car. But I've got a motorcycle. I'll join you in Kalinovka. Well, comrades, it's good-bye! Don't waste time hanging around; every minute is precious! Surovtsev has already had all the guards removed! (*Presses the hands of both men.*)

VOLOSHIN: And what about these books?

SERGEYEV: They aren't of interest to anyone. All the secret documents were evacuated some time back. By the way, Voloshin! I'll stay here till the very last minute, so you'd better take my personal documents, otherwise—who knows—they may fall into the hands of the Germans! (*Reaches for his documents.*) Here's my Party card and identification papers.

TALKIN: You carry them on your person? I always keep them locked up in my writing desk at home, so as not to lose them. Come on, let's go!

SERGEYEV: Well, good-bye, my friends! Don't lose any time. (*Exit TALKIN and VOLOSHIN. SERGEYEV seats himself at the table, where he remains motionless for several seconds. Then he jumps to his feet, goes up to the microphone and switches it on.*) Attention! This is Sergeyev, the Director of the Power Plant, calling! This is Sergeyev, Director of the Power Plant, calling! Attention! All employees and workers who still happen to be on plant property are warned to leave instantly. I repeat, instantly. Once more: Sergeyev, Director of the Power Plant, calling! I order everyone without exception to leave the precincts of the station immediately! (*Glances at his watch and moves away from the microphone. He halts by the table and automatically picks up the telephone receiver.*) Who's that? What the dickens are you still here for? Didn't you hear the orders just broadcast over the station territory? Then why don't you obey them? What if you are the telephone girl! Leave the switchboard instantly! Wait a minute! What's your name? Lena Kartseva? (*Softly.*) Good girl, Lenchka! Please connect me quickly with all the plant buildings in turn. . . . Ah, you've already checked up? . . . Everybody gone? Very good! . . . And now, my dear, hurry up and leave yourself. Quickly! Don't lose any time! The telephone won't be needed any more! Thank you! (*Looks at the clock, goes up to the window and stands listening to the gunfire which grows heavier and nearer. He looks at the clock again.*) Time's come! (*Goes up to the knife-switch and throws it in. No explosion. He stands dumbfounded. He plunges in the switch once again. Then he begins checking up on the cable, going behind the switchboard, and on his knees inspecting the channel along which all the wiring runs. Enter TALKIN. He stops at the threshold, looking with a sneer at SERGEYEV, engrossed in the wires. SERGEYEV turns and suddenly sees TALKIN . . . and the truth dawns on him.*)

SERGEYEV: Was it you?

TALKIN (*brusquely*): Yes, me! (*A pause. SERGEYEV rises from his*

knees. TALKIN drops his hand into the right pocket of his jacket, where he has placed his revolver.)

SERGEYEV (*coming towards TALKIN with his hand outstretched*): Well done, old chap! What a break! I almost blew this plant—the only one of its kind in the world—to smithereens. It would have been a crime unpardonable for an engineer. I suffered torments, but it's only now that I see I had no right to do it. Thank you, old chap! Thank you! (*Shakes TALKIN by the hand. TALKIN stands at a loss and seeing this, SERGEYEV seeks to convince him finally.*) Especially in view of my desire to remain here!

TALKIN (*sighing with relief*): So you're on our side!

SERGEYEV: Almost! (*Indefinitely.*) Old connections! I've lost them! . . . I'll have to find the people I knew!

TALKIN: I'll help you. I long guessed that you were on our side, but I wasn't absolutely certain of it. Sometimes you'd say one thing—exactly as if you were quoting from a *Pravda* editorial, and sometimes you'd say the very opposite. . . .

SERGEYEV: But you couldn't expect me to show you all my cards immediately? You didn't give me grounds for trusting you either. You even handed in an application for Party membership. . . .

TALKIN (*laughing*): That was a move in the game!

SERGEYEV: Not a very wise one!

TALKIN: I understood that later! But I'm very glad everything turned out so well. The Germans have been asking me about you.

SERGEYEV: Who?

TALKIN (*hesitating*): One of them . . . but there's no point in concealing it from you now. Major Linders, a big man in the German military secret service.

SERGEYEV: And have you been connected with this Major Linders long?

TALKIN: With him, about three years! But in general, I've been connected for a long time—since 1918, when the Germans were in the Ukraine. I'll tell you all about it afterwards. Lieutenant Krieger is to get in touch with me here.

SERGEYEV: Who's he?

TALKIN: I don't know. I've never seen him! I was told about him through . . . you know yourself!

SERGEYEV (*quickly guessing*): Through Soikin?

TALKIN: That's right! Soikin told me that Lieutenant Krieger was accompanying the advance units of the German Army and was commissioned to get in touch with me here.

SERGEYEV: I hope you'll introduce me to him.

TALKIN: I have express orders to do so.

SERGEYEV: But still, where's the break in the wire? I couldn't find it!

TALKIN (*laughing*): And you never would, no matter how you looked! I simply replaced a length of wire which Pyzhik had connected. Inside the insulation of my wire are several cunningly hidden breaks which you'd never be able to feel. Major Linders taught me that trick. My orders were to save the station from being blown up. Come here; I'll show you where the breaks are. (*They both go towards the switchboard. TALKIN bends down to lift the wire. SERGEYEV grasps the sledge-hammer which PYZHNIK left leaning against the switchboard and brings it down twice with full force on TALKIN's head. TALKIN falls dead on the spot.*)

SERGEYEV: You dirty skunk! (*Feels in the man's pockets, brings out the revolver, the key of TALKIN's apartment and the length of wiring. Noise behind stage. The doors are flung open and, revolver in hand, KRIEGER bursts into the room followed by a group of armed soldiers.*)

KRIEGER: Put up the hands, Russ! (*SERGEYEV slowly raises his arms, one hand holding TALKIN's pistol, muzzle pointing downwards.*)

(*KRIEGER to one of the soldiers*): Die Waffe wegnehmen! (*A soldier takes the revolver from SERGEYEV and hands it to the lieutenant. KRIEGER looks at it in surprise.*) Meine Pistole!

SERGEYEV (*understanding the lieutenant's words*): Lieutenant Krieger?

KRIEGER: You are Herr Talkin?

SERGEYEV: Yes, that's me! (*Drops his hands.*) You understand Russian?

KRIEGER (*shrugging*): A little. Who is that man? (*Pointing to TALKIN's dead body.*)

SERGEYEV (*regaining his wits and falling into the role he has decided upon*): That is . . . that's Engineer Sergeyev, the Director of the power station, Herr Leutnant. I couldn't succeed in winning him over to our side. He tried to blow up the station and I had to kill him, Herr Krieger. I'm tired and very much upset. You understand—I've killed a man.

KRIEGER: That is nothing! Bitte! Germany has great respect for people who help her! Alle ausser einem müssen das Zimmer verlassen! (*Exeunt soldiers, except one who stands sentry at the door. SERGEYEV and KRIEGER sit down.*)

SERGEYEV: I am very glad, Herr Krieger, that I've succeeded in fulfilling your orders and saved the station from being blown up. It's the only station of its kind in the whole world!

KRIEGER: I have heard about this excellent station. General von Klistengarten will be very pleased! You will get an award!

SERGEYEV: As you probably know, Herr Krieger, I've been working quite a long time now, and it's not for awards that I work. The German nation, German culture has always been my ideal. I'm a German at heart!

KRIEGER: That is very good! Aber, haben Sie . . . have you identification papers?

SERGEYEV: Identification papers. Not with me! . . . They're at home, in my writing desk. (*KRIEGER rises with a look of mistrust.*) But don't you think it will suffice for a document, Herr Krieger, if I refer you to the name of . . . Major Linders?

KRIEGER (*reassured*): Major Linders. Oh, ja! (*Laughs.*) Major Linders is a very good document! We must now go to headquarters. You must give explanations about the station. (*Rises. Noise outside the window. Shouts in German. Silence follows. Then an order, rapped out in German. KRIEGER looks through the window.*) General von Klistengarten has arrived, with Captain Gunter. (*Exit KRIEGER.*)

(*SERGEYEV and the guard remain on the stage. A short while later*

KRIEGER *re-enters with GUNTER, and two soldiers who, upon KRIEGER's orders, carry out the body of TALKIN.*)

KRIEGER (*introducing SERGEYEV*): Herr Talkin! Kapitän Gunter!

GUNTER (*speaking in fluent Russian but with a marked German accent, shakes hands*): Do you speak German?

SERGEYEV: Unfortunately, no, Herr Kapitän!

GUNTER: That's all right. I know Russian. I've lived in Riga quite a long time. Everyone speaks Russian there. Lieutenant Krieger has just reported to General von Klistengarten about your heroic deed. The General expresses his thanks to you on behalf of Germany.

SERGEYEV: I only did my duty!

GUNTER: The General has expressed a desire to inspect the station personally. You will serve as his guide and give all the explanations.

SERGEYEV: I'm profoundly moved by such a privilege, Herr Kapitän! But I'm afraid I don't know German!

GUNTER: The General speaks Russian fluently. Before your revolution in 1917 his father owned a big estate in Tula Gubernia. Is everything in order at the station?

SERGEYEV: Perfectly! A few seconds more and it would have been blown to pieces. Luckily I was just in time!

GUNTER: Yes, I know! But wait a minute. . . . (*In perturbation.*) Is the station mined?

SERGEYEV: Yes, Herr Kapitän!

GUNTER: And the building we're in now, is that also mined?

SERGEYEV: No, indeed, Herr Kapitän! We've mined only the station itself. It was decided to smash up the control room with a sledgehammer.

GUNTER (*reassured*): Ah! That's good! Lieutenant Krieger, see that the station is immediately cleared of all mines!

KRIEGER: Ja, Herr Kapitän!

SERGEYEV: If you'll allow me, I'll show your men exactly where all the mines have been set and acquaint them with the wiring scheme of the station. As you know, one of the distinguishing features of the power plant is the high tension wires. This might lead to a catastrophe if one isn't careful.

GUNTER: Very good! Lieutenant Krieger! Detail some men to help Herr Talkin to clear out the mines. We must safeguard the station.
(*Exit KRIEGER.*)

SERGEYEV: This is a remarkable station!

GUNTER: Yes, we have explicit orders to keep this station intact at all costs. It is of vital importance to us. We are to build many military plants around the station. According to the plans of the German command, this is to be an advance base of production and supplies. That will facilitate our continued advance and our ultimate victory. There were a number of plants here before, weren't there?

SERGEYEV: Yes, quite a lot!

GUNTER: We particularly regret that we were unable to prevent Factory No. 12 from being blown up. We could have made good use of it.

SERGEYEV: Was it blown up?

GUNTER: Unfortunately, it was, and we'd counted on putting it to good use! In general, we never thought the Bolsheviks would go to such extremes as destroying their own plants and factories! It must be confessed that in this respect we erred in our calculations!

SERGEYEV: Yes—the Bolsheviks are resolute people, Herr Kapitän!

GUNTER: I'm sorry to have to agree with you on that point! Well, you had better start clearing the station of mines.

SERGEYEV: I'll do everything you've ordered me to!

GUNTER: I've got an idea! We have to put the station in someone's charge until our own people arrive. I'll appoint you Director.

SERGEYEV: Me?

GUNTER: Yes, you! As a reward for your loyal services!

SERGEYEV: Herr Kapitän! This is indeed a great honour for me! I really don't know how to express my gratitude!

GUNTER: You have been invested with a high trust, Herr Talkin! See that you justify it!

SERGEYEV: I'm overwhelmed by this unexpected appointment! But it is a great responsibility. You must let me have some people. . . .

GUNTER: Men will soon arrive to help you remove the mines!

SERGEYEV: I'm not thinking of them. I need people to help me run

the station—experts, electricians, technicians, etc. You understand?

GUNTER: We have no one available just now! They'll arrive in a couple of days. Oh, yes! My men have detained two of your employees here. We can make them work until our own specialists arrive. I'll order them to be brought in—that is, if they haven't been shot yet!

SERGEYEV (*restraining him*): Wait a bit! I don't want them! They're liable to harm the station, on the contrary. They're enemies.

GUNTER: They'll be powerless to do any harm! Only let them try! I'll have them called in right away!

SERGEYEV: Better not, Herr Kapitän!

GUNTER: You surprise me, Herr Talkin.

SERGEYEV: Oh, all right, then have them brought here!

GUNTER: You speak with them. Promise them a reward! If necessary, threaten them with extreme measures!

SERGEYEV: But tell them to be brought in singly! (*Exit GUNTER. SERGEYEV seats himself at the table. With signs of agitation he straightens some papers on the table.*)

GUNTER (*entering*): If you like I can leave you alone with them. You can try to talk them round. I'll leave the sentry at the door . . . to protect you. (*A NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER leads in PYZHNIK.*)

PYZHIK (*looking at SERGEYEV with surprise*): What the . . . What's the idea? *Tovarisch* . . .

SERGEYEV (*shouting*): Silence! Show respect to your superiors! Please remember, this is no Soviet regime! It's German order we have now. Be so kind as to address me in the proper form: Herr Direktor, or Herr Engineer Talkin! Understand?

PYZHIK (*struck dumbfounded*): Absolutely nothing, so help me God! Engineer Talkin . . .

SERGEYEV: Blockhead! Not "Engineer Talkin" but "Herr Engineer Talkin!" You see, Herr Kapitän, these people can't understand even the simplest things. This was our electrician. I know him slightly. A bit thick-headed, although for some reason or other the former director Sergeyev had a good opinion of him.

GUNTER: Yes, it doesn't look as if he had too much brains. A stupid face! All right, then, I'll be leaving now, Herr Talkin. I'll send the

men round to you! (*Exit, together with the NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER.*)

SERGEYEV (*roughly*): Sit down! I want to speak to you. (*In an undertone.*) Sit down, for heaven's sake! You nearly gave me away! (*Aloud.*) By order of General von Klistengarten I have been appointed director of the power station in the place of Sergeyev . . .

PYZHIK (*sits down, but still is slow to grasp the situation*): And where's that there . . . Sergeyev?

SERGEYEV: I've killed Sergeyev! . . . (*Rises and goes up to the sentry.*) Would you mind letting me have a match, please?

SENTRY: Ich verstehe Sie nicht!

SERGEYEV: Do you understand Russian?

SENTRY (*shaking his head*): Ich verstehe Sie gar nicht!

SERGEYEV: Absolutely nothing? No Russian at all?

SENTRY (*shaking his head*): Rus . . . nein!

SERGEYEV: That's really too bad, of course! (*Returns and seats himself at the table, speaking in a lowered voice.*) Why didn't you leave?

PYZHIK: I wanted to wait for the explosion and for . . . for you. And they caught me! And Pavel too. He's in the next room . . . waiting to be received by the . . . Herr Direktor! I'd never have thought you'd get yourself mixed up with the Germans! Never!

SERGEYEV: Sh-h! I see you still don't understand! I'll explain the whole thing later on. This is not the time! Don't you trust me?

PYZHIK: I don't know what to say! I just don't understand a thing!

SERGEYEV: Listen, Taras! In the name of our old friendship, please do exactly as I tell you. We must resume work. Understand?

PYZHIK (*doggedly*): No! Why should I start working for the Germans!

SERGEYEV: Someone's liable to come in at any moment. There's no time for explanations now! You'll understand everything later. But you must remember one thing; for the present nothing else is necessary. I'm now Engineer Talkin! Do you promise?

(*Enter NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER.*)

PYZHIK: Yes. . . . Herr Engineer Talkin!

SERGEYEV (*aloud*): Splendid, Herr Pyzhik. Then it's agreed, you are

to continue working at the station as before! (*Makes a sign to the NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER that PAVEL be brought in.*)

NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER: Ja! (*Nods his head, goes out, and returns with PAVEL.*)

SERGEYEV (*sternly*): Sit down!

PAVEL (*astounded, sits down awkwardly*): Yes?!

(*Exit NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER.*)

SERGEYEV: Why didn't you leave?

PAVEL: Alexandra Nikolaevna asked me to stay behind and look after you, to see that everything was in order . . .

SERGEYEV (*kindly*): And you remained behind, my boy?

PAVEL: Yes, along with Taras Nikanorovich!

SERGEYEV: Now listen to what I'm going to tell you, remember it well, and keep mum! . . .

GUNTER (*entering*): And how are things progressing?

SERGEYEV: I've already come to an agreement with both of them, Herr Kapitän! I thought it would be much more difficult to persuade them. But they were so intimidated that they agreed immediately. They can now be released from custody!

GUNTER: I'll give the order right away!

PYZHIK: Thank you . . . Herr Direktor!

SERGEYEV: And now we'll attend to removing the mines!

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE TWO

Section of the generator room of the power plant. Several huge generators can be seen. One of them is running, giving off a characteristic, high-pitched hum. Numerous measuring instruments on marble panel boards. The needles of ammeters, voltmeters and other gauges smoothly oscillate. Colored signal lamps flash on and off at intervals. Behind and

parallel to the generators runs a long iron bridge. On the right side of the stage the bridge terminates in a staircase descending into the room. On the bridge, near the stairs, is a small panel board with three knife-switches. On the wall are a loudspeaker and a clock. The entrance to the hall is on the left. Near the entrance stands a German sentry with a rifle. Another sentry stands at each generator. A German NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER slowly paces up and down the hall. PYZHNIK is moodily handling some tools on a work bench in the corner, PAVEL is cleaning one of the generators with a rag. Enter SERGEYEV and KRIEGER. The NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER snaps to attention and begins to report, but KRIEGER waves him away.

KRIEGER: And so, Herr Talkin, when the General comes you will ensure order and give full explanations for everything. The General likes full explanations of technical things.

SERGEYEV: Rest assured, Herr Krieger. Everything will be as it should be.

KRIEGER: The army staff has given very good reports about you, Herr Talkin. You are a real German patriot.

SERGEYEV: I'm very pleased to hear that. I'm very grateful both to the General and to you, Herr Krieger! You are a man of such perspicacity that you immediately place trust in me, although I did not have any documents with me yesterday. It was only today that I was able to show them to you.

KRIEGER: Oh, yes! I am very persp— How do you say it?

SERGEYEV: Perspicacious. That means very clever.

KRIEGER: Ja. I am per-spi-ca-cious. A very long word. Like the German language: all-ge-mein-ver-ständ-lich aus-ein-ander-set-zung! (Laughs.)

SERGEYEV: And so, Herr Krieger, the General. . . .

KRIEGER: General von Klistengarten will be here exactly in one half hour. Auf Wiedersehen! (Exit.)

SERGEYEV: Very good, Herr Krieger. (Watches the retiring lieutenant and then slowly goes up to the window where he stands brooding, gazing out at the fields receding to the horizon lighted dull red by a distant conflagration. The clock strikes seven. The loudspeaker starts its familiar hum and then the voice of the announcer is heard: "Go-

vorit Moskva!" SERGEYEV, PYZHNIK and PAVEL give a start. The German sentries turn their heads with a perplexed look. The NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER halts in his beat.)

LOUDSPEAKER: Govorit Moskva! Moscow calling! Here is the evening communiqué of the Soviet Informbureau . . .

NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER: Was ist das? Warum spielt das Radio hier?

LOUDSPEAKER: During the day our troops engaged in stubborn fighting with the enemy on all the fronts . . .

NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER (*dashing up to SERGEYEV menacingly*): Who is to blame for this? For why the radio? I will shoot!

SERGEYEV (*calmly*): They've simply forgotten to switch it off, mein Herr. No one here is to blame!

NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER (*impatiently and angrily making signs to have the loudspeaker switched off immediately*): Schneller! Zum Teufel!

LOUDSPEAKER: Behind the enemy lines, in village K. Uncle Anton's guerrilla detachment seized a German staff car, killing twelve Fascists . . .

SERGEYEV (*calling out*): Pavel! Be a good boy! Go into the Club room and turn off the radio! You can see how it upsets the nerves of Herr N.C.O. . . . (*In an undertone.*) Your duty's up. You needn't return. Better overtake Alexandra Nikolaevna and tell her that everything here is O.K. Understand?

PAVEL: Very well! (*Goes slowly towards the door. By means of gestures, SERGEYEV explains to the NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER that the radio will soon be switched off. As PAVEL passes him, the NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER jabs the boy in the back to hasten him on.*)

NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER: Schneller, Rus, schneller!

LOUDSPEAKER: We will now broadcast a concert of Soviet songs. (*The sound of a militant Soviet song rings out. The NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER is beside himself with anger. One of the German sentries gives a sly grin. The NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER, guessing his sentiment, dashes to the wall and tears down the loudspeaker.*)

NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER: Donnerwetter!

SERGEYEV: Herr Pyzhik! (PYZHİK goes up to him.) Is everything in order, Taras Nikanorovich? Don't forget, a German General has promised to visit the station!

PYZHIK: Of course everything's in order, but it would be better if it wasn't. (*Waves his hand.*)

SERGEYEV (*sternly*): As long as the station is working everything must be in perfect order.

PYZHIK (*in challenging tones*): I don't know, Herr Direktor, what sort of order there should be at a German station! I've never served the Germans. Never had occasion to!

SERGEYEV (*in hurt tones*): Taras!

PYZHIK (*changing his voice and speaking in an undertone, glancing warily at the NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER*): All right, I'll lay off it! But I can't understand you! Explain what it's all about, won't you? You've done in Talkin, and it serves him right, the dirty skunk! But what next? You've had the whole station cleared of mines. Germans are as thick as flies all over the place, you can't take a step without knocking up against one of them, and here we are working for them. I can't go on, I tell you! I won't work for them!

SERGEYEV: That's fine! Pavel's already gone, and he won't be coming back. And I want you to go too. Go away from here and join our people. Find out where Nina is, and also my Boris . . . Boris!

PYZHIK: All right, but what about you? What are you thinking of doing? Let's leave together!

SERGEYEV: There's still a little job I've got to attend to. While you and Pavel were at the dam, I was busy working all night.

PYZHIK: Where?

SERGEYEV (*after a moment's hesitation*): In the bus vault!

PYZHIK: The bus vault?

SERGEYEV: Yes. And now you'd better be leaving! When you find them tell them that everything here is all right. I'll catch up with you later on.

PYZHIK (*beginning to understand*): What's the hurry! I've got plenty of time. I'll leave after it gets dark.

SERGEYEV: But what's the point in waiting? Go home and get ready.

PYZHIK (*nonchalantly*): What's there to get ready?

SERGEYEV (*losing his patience*): Herr Pyzhik! I order you to leave the station and go home immediately!

PYZHIK (*slowly leaving*): All right! All right! I'm going! What's biting him?

(*The door opens, LIEUTENANT KRIEGER steps in briskly, raps out a command in German: "Achtung!" The sentries snap stiffly to attention, the NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER stands frozen to the spot. Enter GENERAL VON KLISTENGARTEN, accompanied by a group of German officers. With a welcoming smile SERGEYEV comes forward to meet the GENERAL.*)

GENERAL: Zdravstvuite, Herr . . . er . . . er . . .

KRIEGER (*prompting*): Talkin!

GENERAL: Ah, yes! Herr Talkin!

SERGEYEV: I am highly honored, Your Excellency, at this opportunity to welcome you to the station entrusted to my charge.

GENERAL: I am sure you will as before continue loyally . . . er . . . safeguarding the interests of Germany.

SERGEYEV: I shall do everything in my power!

GENERAL: I must say you keep everything spotlessly clean here! Exactly like in a good . . . er . . . bathroom!

SERGEYEV: Power plants are always spotless. A characteristic of this particular type of enterprise.

GENERAL: Well, I should like you to show me around. I have a real passion for inspecting enterprises, no matter what branch of production it be. And the more so of an enterprise which henceforth and for all time to come enters into the system of the German State machinery.

SERGEYEV: Allow me, Your Excellency! The station which I have the honor to show you was built in 1935 during the second Soviet Pyatiletka. Your Excellency knows what Pyatiletka means?

GENERAL: Very well! But now they're done with! Is that not so, meine Herren? Nicht wahr?

ATTENDANT RETINUE: So! Jawohl!

SERGEYEV: The station has a total capacity of 175,000 horsepower. This generator which is running gives 25,000 horsepower. Just look at the splendid workmanship!

GENERAL: These are German imports.

SERGEYEV: I beg your pardon, Your Excellency, but this generator was built wholly of Soviet material, at Soviet plants and by Soviet engineers!

GENERAL (*taken aback*): Oh! But it is a good piece of work! Almost like German!

(PYZHNIK *softly opens the door and enters. The guard is about to stop him but, seeing his familiar face and his persuasive gestures, allows him to come into the room.*)

SERGEYEV: The station is run automatically. And this is its specific and most important feature. One engineer is quite enough to serve it under ordinary conditions. All digressions from normal operation not only are recorded by instruments, but are automatically rectified. A very intricate and clever process.

GENERAL (*cautiously*): Was there no technical assistance extended by foreign firms in building this station?

SERGEYEV: The automatic system installed in this station is a Soviet invention, Your Excellency. Foreign firms, including, I regret to say, our German concerns too, declined to accept the order to work out such a system in view of the very stringent demands the Bolsheviks made in respect to automatic control. The Bolsheviks wanted the station to be run entirely without human help!

GENERAL: A very bold idea! Well, and did they manage?

SERGEYEV: Actually, they did! (*A buzz of conversation and ejaculations from the GENERAL's attendants.*) There's no other station like it in the world!

GENERAL: Then we now possess a unique enterprise of truly vital importance! We must immediately send to Berlin all the blueprints of this power station together with all the pertinent documents! Lieutenant Krieger! You will take this mission upon yourself. You were first to enter the station, and I entrust you with the honor of carrying the blueprints to Berlin! You have earned this honor!

KRIEGER (*taking a step forward and clicking his heels*): Very good, Herr General!

GENERAL: Then I haven't wasted my time inspecting this station! Fine!

SERGEYEV: I deeply regret, Your Excellency, that the former director of this station has hidden all the blueprints and documents. I spent all last night looking for them in order to hand them over to you. But I failed to find them. They have apparently been destroyed.

GENERAL (*disappointed*): The devil take it! How vexing!

SERGEYEV: But I am perfectly familiar with this station, Your Excellency, and I make so bold as to say that I can help your engineers to read the diagrams and restore all the blueprints of the automatic control system!

GENERAL: Very good! Splendid! I will bring you to the notice of the Führer, and I am sure he will note your services to Germany—your new Vaterland!

SERGEYEV: My fatherland will be well satisfied with me, General! I'm ready to lay down my life for it!

GENERAL: Well said indeed, Herr Talkin! A true German could not have spoken better.

SERGEYEV: Thank you, General! . . . (*Ascends the bridge and stops at the small switchboard.*) This small switchboard was set up here during the first months of war. From here we control certain special installations in the power station. This switch, for instance, controls a mechanism which lowers steel shutters on the doors and windows. These shutters protect the machinery from shrapnel during air raids. (*He throws in the switch. With a slight rumble steel shutters slowly close down on the doors and windows. The GENERAL and his attendants watch curiously as the steel walls descend.*) And this switch disconnects the lights throughout the entire station should the need arise. (*For a second he turns off the lights, but then restores them.*) And as for this third switch, General, it is wholly my own invention. I only finished installing it last night and I dedicate this work of mine to Germany. (*Places his hand on the switch.*) I will now throw in this switch and . . . (*His tone changes sharply.*) you'll be blown to

hell along with the whole station!! (*The GENERAL and his followers recoil in terror, their faces registering fear and horror.*) You Hitler bandits! What did you imagine? That Engineer Sergeyev would make you a nice little gift of such a plant as this? Oh, no! You backed the wrong horse this time! And as for you, you old blockhead! It was your Tula estate you wanted back? You wanted to force the Soviet people back into your yoke again? Don't dare budge, any of you! Hands up! (*They all raise their hands with a look of horror. Only one of the officers standing behind SERGEYEV under the bridge, stealthily draws his pistol. SERGEYEV doesn't see him.*) You Fascist degenerates! (*The officer points his pistol at SERGEYEV. PYZHIK flings himself against the German.*)

PYZHIK: The hell you will! (*Hits the officer's arm. A shot rings out, but the bullet flies wide of the mark.*) Throw in the switch, Nikolai Yemelyanovich, throw it in, old man!

(*SERGEYEV looks around, sees PYZHIK, nods and throws in both switches. The lights flash off and a terrific explosion simultaneously rends the air. Hydroelectric Plant No. 6 has been blown up.*)

CURTAIN

THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE

A Play in Three Acts and Nine Scenes

By KONSTANTIN SIMONOV

AMERICAN ACTING VERSION

By Clifford Odets



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SIMONOV

Konstantin Simonov was born in 1915 in the midst of the First World War, in which his father was lost without trace. The boy went to school at Saratov on the Volga but had to leave before graduating so that he might support himself and his mother by working in a factory as a turner's mechanic.

In the summer of 1934 a trip to the White Sea Baltic Canal so impressed him with the way in which the former criminals at work upon it were being converted into enthusiastic citizens that he wrote the poem Horizons, which was his first publication.

In 1939 he attempted his first play, Bearskin, which was about an Arctic explorer. This was revised and produced in Moscow in 1940 under the title A Story About One Love, but was condemned by all the critics. Shortly after, A Fellow from Our Town, dealing with the transformation of an unimportant man into a daring tank driver, was a great success and was awarded the Stalin Prize of 100,000 rubles. Some of the same characters, beloved by Russian audiences, reappeared in his later play The Russian People (1942), included here in Clifford Odets's version for the New York Theatre Guild. This presents a powerful cross-section of the inhabitants of a Russian town surrounded by the invading Germans.

Meanwhile Simonov, in the army, had been acting as correspondent of the Red Army paper Red Star; and this experience gave him the material for his book of short stories From the Black Sea to the Sea of Barents (published in English under the title No Quarter). His dispatches from Stalingrad were collected under the title Stalingrad Fights On and later expanded into a novel with the title Days and Nights. He also collected the poems written to his wife under the title With Her and Without Her. Among these one beginning "Wait for me and I'll return" became particularly popular. From it came the title of his play Wait for Me (1942), which presents a Russian aviator forced to earth behind the German lines but inspired to fight his way out by the knowledge that his wife was waiting for him at home. In So It Will Be (1944) he again took very simple material—various persons sharing the same crowded apartment and preparing for the reconstruction of Russia—to show the heroic quality of the Russian people.

H. W. L. D.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

IVAN NIKITICH SAFONOV,* aged 32, Automobile Battalion Commander

MARTHA PETROVNA, aged 55, his mother

VALYA ANOSCHENKO, aged 19, chauffeur

ALEXANDR VASILYEVICH VASIN, aged 62, former Tsarist officer

IVAN IVANOVICH GLOBALA, aged 45, assistant military surgeon

PANIN, aged 30, a newspaper staff writer

BORISOV, aged 25, a political commissar

SHURA, aged 27, a typist

KHARITONOV, aged 60, a doctor, appointed Mayor by the Germans

MARIA NIKOLAEVNA, aged 55, his wife

KOZLOVSKY, alias VASILENKO, aged 30, nephew of VASIN

MOROZOV }
GAVRILOV } Red Army men

VASIL, guerrilla leader

IVANOV, guerrilla

LIEUTENANT VASILYEV

AN OLD MAN

LUKONIN,* aged 32, a Major-General

SEMYONOV, a prisoner of the Germans

ROSENBERG }
WERNER } German officers

KRAUSE, German private

UNKNOWN MAN

WOUNDED MAN

Red Army men and officers, German soldiers

Time of Action, Autumn, 1941. *Place of Action*, The Southern Front:

Act I, Scene 1—House of SAFONOV's mother in an occupied town.

* These characters figured in Simonov's play "A Fellow from Our Town."

Scene 2—SAFONOV's Headquarters across the river. Scene 3—The same; some days later. Act II, Scene 1—KHARITONOV's house in the occupied town. Scene 2—The river bank at night. Act III, Scene 1—SAFONOV's Headquarters, immediately afterwards. Scene 2—KHARITONOV's house, everything laid waste. Scene 3—The river bank. Scene 4—KHARITONOV's house.

THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

At rise, MARTHA and MARIA are in attitudes of listening to tramp of soldiers in street outside. After an intense moment MARIA speaks.

MARIA: What do you hear . . .

MARTHA: The same thing you hear—the tramping of German soldiers through the streets of a Russian town.

MARIA: They've been here for weeks—why does it make you nervous? (MARTHA, *after a pause, breaks her vigil and goes back to the table.*)

MARTHA (*with a canny smile*): Maria, you ask too many questions, even for an old friend. (*Picks up cards.*) Let me finish telling your fortune.

MARIA (*coming to the table*): It's late, Martha, I only meant to stay a minute.

MARTHA (*ignoring the remark*): Do you remember the nights we used to lay out the cards and wonder the sort of husbands we'd find? (*Suddenly moves to and from the door, making sure it is locked.*) At night, I like my door locked.

MARIA (*sotto voce, looking around*): Martha, are you hiding someone—who is here?

MARTHA (*with a shrug*): A few mice and a cricket, Maria. (*Business of cards.*) These cards, these cards, yes, they promised us wonderful husbands, these cards. Instead, mine died all too soon, and yours turns out to be a real snake-in-the-grass.

MARIA: But, Martha, what else could he do? The moment the Germans captured the town, they made their quarters in our house, and then they appointed him Mayor of the town. He didn't want it.

MARTHA (*cutting her short*): Your doctor-husband made peace with the highest bidder. Wait, wait till your son comes back from the war! He'll thank you both for having made his name so black he'll never be able to scrub it clean again.

MARIA: Oh, if I only knew he was alive! The last letter I received was months ago. (*There is a peremptory rap at the door. MARTHA stiffens.*)

MARTHA: Who's there?

(*A VOICE speaks outside.*)

VOICE: Hurry up.

(*MARTHA slips the hook. Two GERMAN SOLDIERS and KOZLOVSKY enter; the latter wears a semi-military cap and coat.*)

KOZLOVSKY: I'm looking for a girl who swam across the river—a small active creature, like a weasel. Is she here?

MARTHA (*shrugging*): Search the house. (*KOZLOVSKY suddenly spies MARIA across the room, her back to him. He strides across the room and spins her around.*)

KOZLOVSKY: Excuse me.

MARIA (*coldly*): Good evening.

KOZLOVSKY (*with mingled flattery and sarcasm*): But, what is the wife of the Mayor of the town doing here?

MARIA: Visiting a friend of thirty years.

KOZLOVSKY: That's a ripe old friendship. (*Abruptly he starts for the door behind her.*)

MARIA: There's no one there . . . (*He gives her a quick keen glance and then crosses back to the table.*)

KOZLOVSKY: Ah, fortune-telling. Do you think you'll get your wish? (*Then, to MARIA.*) Have you been here long?

MARIA: For quite some time.

KOZLOVSKY: And, there's no one here?

MARIA: No.

KOZLOVSKY (*after a pause, to the SOLDIERS*): Let's try next door. There's nobody here.

(*They leave; MARTHA locks the door again and fastidiously wipes her hand on a towel hanging near the door.*)

MARTHA (*scornfully*): That man, Kozlovsky!

MARIA (*sadly*): Yes, the first time I saw him, he seemed very nice. He had some relatives here, he said—an uncle he hadn't seen for fifteen years. We sat drinking tea . . . and now, he shakes and twitches.

MARTHA: When people sink so low, they always shake and twitch. Your husband too, Maria—Maria—why don't you pack your things and leave him? Right now, tonight! Give the Germans a dose of poison and leave him.

MARIA (*moving to the door*): It's getting late, I'd better be going. But please don't think I'm bad . . .

MARTHA: Don't worry, my dear. Drop in whenever you need some sympathy. To be married to such a man!

MARIA (*at the open door*): Whoever is here—I wish him well . . .

(*MARIA slips out. MARTHA locks the door behind her, listens for a moment, and then goes to the table where she solemnly raps on the door twice. Then she turns to the stove in the corner and calls out in a loud voice . . .*)

MARTHA: No more guests. Come out, little weasel. (*VALYA, dressed in knee-length jacket and men's knee boots, peeps out from behind the stove. Shots are heard.*)

MARTHA: Did you hear them?

VALYA (*grimly looking around*): Uh-huh.

MARTHA: Did you peep out while the Germans were here?

VALYA: No, I was afraid to move. Anyway, my clothes are dry.

MARTHA (*incredulously*): You really swam across the river?

VALYA: Uh-huh.

MARTHA (*as VALYA drinks from a jug of water*): That was Kozlovsky with them, the one who asks the questions. A mean, despicable man, a stranger in the town. That shows they can't find enough scoundrels to act as their policemen; so they cart them from town to town.

VALYA: Uh-humm.

MARTHA (*admiringly*): Ah, you Army Scout, you Army Scout! Want some tea?

VALYA: Uh-huh.

MARTHA: What's all this—uh-uhmning at me, like an ignorant girl? Can't you say, "Thank you, Auntie dear, I don't mind if I do have some tea"?

VALYA (*smiling faintly*): Thank you, Auntie dear, I don't mind if I do have some tea.

MARTHA: That's better. (*Shot sounds in the distance.*) Shooting again.

VALYA: When is that man coming?

MARTHA: Don't worry, my dear; he'll come. The German patrols are busy tramping through the streets. He'll be here before you know it. Now have your tea, my dear.

VALYA (*taking the tea*): Please, I'm dry as grass. We have no water over there. The water tower was blown up.

MARTHA: Yes, terrible times. (*Watches VALYA lap up the tea.*) And what's the news from my son? Still in command of you people over there?

VALYA: Still in command. He told me to give you several kisses. (*Turning.*) That's a good picture of him.

MARTHA: He's not much to look at, but handsome or not, he's a real eagle of the people! He was always a leader.

VALYA: Even as a boy?

MARTHA: As a boy? I should say so! He ran like the wind! He swam like a fish! He stole gooseberries, ate pancakes, kissed the girls! I should say so! (*Shot is heard.*) Shooting again . . . But where's his brains? Twice he sends a girl across on such a dangerous work!

VALYA: But it's not his fault. We're short on men.

MARTHA: Short or long, this is not a woman's job. I'd put him across my lap if he were here.

VALYA (*with sudden anger*): He does what he has to do! You have no right to talk that way!

MARTHA (*with a chuckle*): Just what I wanted to know . . . you like him!

VALYA (*defiantly*): Is there anything wrong with that?

MARTHA: No, but it's hardly the time for weddings, Valya.

VALYA (*blushing*): I didn't say a wedding . . .

MARTHA (*laughing*): If he asks you, tell him I put the thought in your mind. (*Now MARTHA stands briskly and looks at a clock on the wall. She goes to the door and tests the bolt again, listening all the time.*) Our friend will be here any minute. The patrols are off the street. . . .

(*A door slams in the back of the house. VALYA starts to her feet and draws away to one side. VASILY runs into the room, gun in hand.*)

VASILY (*with a smile*): It's no fun to come in through your empty chicken coop. My ears are full of feathers.

MARTHA: Put your gun away . . .

VALYA: Why, Sergei Ivanovitch!

VASILY (*quickly*): I don't know that name, Comrade. You call me Vasil, understand?

VALYA (*frightened*): Yes, I understand.

VASILY: Perhaps in bygone days a man who resembled me was Chairman of the City Council. Perhaps you drove his car. But that was yesterday, understand, Comrade Chauffeur?

VALYA: I understand you again.

VASILY (*breaking into a grin*): Well now that everything's understood, how are you, Valya girl? Still patching tubes and tires? Spring broke again? Eh?

VALYA (*laughing*): Still the same, always joking . . .

VASILY (*with an edge of heaviness*): Yes, jokes—it's all a joke nowadays, Comrade Valya. Where's the note?

VALYA (*giving it to him from her bosom*): Was I waiting for you?

VASILY (*opening the note*): Of course you were. . . . (*Reads the note.*) I see . . . Yes, yes. (*Thoughtfully presses his lips.*) Um-m-m. . . . (*Looks up abruptly.*) And what's the news across the river?

VALYA: Nothing's changed. We're holding the same stretch from the river to the settlement. The Germans are around us, like a skin around a melon.

VASILY (*with a sigh*): Those industrious Germans! They're in there twenty miles deep! Who'd ever have dreamed we'd find ourselves behind the Germans? But at least you have Soviet power in your half of the town, across the river. Here there are only Germans.

VALYA: Excuse me, Vasili, it's late. What shall I tell the Captain?

VASIL: The Germans are filtering supplies through across the bridge. He'll have to blow it up.

VALYA: When?

VASIL: The sooner the better.

VALYA: That's all?

VASIL: That's all. (*Sees her move toward the bedroom door.*) Where're you going?

VALYA: Starting back.

VASIL: You can't get through tonight.

VALYA: Of course I can.

MARTHA: Stay here tonight.

VALYA: They need me over there.

VASIL: A grain of sand couldn't slip through the German lines tonight.

VALYA: I'm not a grain of sand, Comrade Vasili, but I'll slip through.

VASIL: Feel her head, Martha Petrovna; she must have fever.

MARTHA (*smiling*): Yes, a special kind of fever.

VALYA: They're short on men and they need me there. Good-night. (*There is a soft scratching at the door. VASIL draws his gun. MARTHA silently signals for them to leave; both VALYA and VASIL go to their former hiding places.*)

MARTHA (*at the door*): Who's there? (*The scratching sounds at the door again. She opens the door. A MAN dressed in civilian clothes, covered with blood, stumbles in. Helping him into the room, MARTHA PETROVNA quickly hooks the door.*) What is it? Who are you? (*The MAN falls upon the floor.*) Who are you?

MAN (*weakly*): Who is here?

MARTHA: Friends.

MAN: Water . . .

MARTHA (*calling VALYA*): Come here, get some water. Wait, let's lift him first.

MAN: No, don't. . . . Someone here? Something to say . . . Die . . . Before I die . . .

MARTHA (*calling*): Vasili.

MAN: Who is it, a friend?

VALYA: Yes, yes, a friend.

MAN: I make, was making my way through enemy encirclement . . . caught me . . . took my documents. My name is . . . Water! Give me water!

VALYA (*giving him a drink*): And, your name?

MAN: Junior political instructor . . . Water. (*As he is drinking, a shudder shakes him and he falls back. VALYA examines his jacket; the pockets are turned inside out and the sleeves ripped open.*)

VALYA: Everything's been torn to shreds . . . they searched him well.

VASIL: Farewell, my unknown comrade. . . . (*Rising.*) He's probably dripped a trail of blood outside. You'd better put on a coat and go out and sweep it up before they see it in the daylight. Take a look around while you're at it. (*Suddenly wipes a tear away.*) You'd think I'd get used to it, but I'm sorry for people. Don't you cry, Chauffeur?

VALYA: No. I've seen everything there is to see, Comrade. Things I never dreamed of seeing. No more tears left. No, I don't cry.

CURTAIN

ACT ONE

SCENE TWO

Daybreak.

Staff Headquarters of SAFONOV. A room in some railway premises. Several doors. SHURA is typing. A SOLDIER crosses with a box of cartridges for which SHURA signs. Then CAPTAIN SAFONOV enters, goes to the table, and studies the map. Shots are heard.

SAFONOV: Life is a dream . . . the seventh day now.

SHURA: What seventh day?

SAFONOV: Globa's been missing seven days. Did he reach our main

troops or didn't he? He's supposed to be back with orders from our general staff. Where is he? I'm improvising here—we're hanging on in the dark, waiting for orders that never come. Dammit, and where's the girl, where's Valya? She's been gone for two days now.

SHURA: Don't worry, Captain Safonov.

SAFONOV: I do worry. (*Snorts.*) Borisov, stop that strumming and come out here. (*BORISOV enters with guitar.*) How long have you been acting as my Commissar, Borisov?

BORISOV: Must be three days. No, two; no, three.

SAFONOV: Your head's as twisted as mine. Days, nights, siege, vigil—is it Tuesday? Thursday? What? Have you called in that old man—what's his name—Vasin?

BORISOV: Yes, he'll be here any minute now.

SAFONOV: He'll be my Chief of Staff, if he's suitable. He gets the rank to celebrate the fact that we're completely surrounded. Yes, Borisov, my boy, we're short on people.

BORISOV: I wonder what about Valya. Two days she hasn't turned up. Do you think the Germans have captured her?

SAFONOV: Stop. I won't have you say that. Why are men such swine? Twice the girl volunteers to go out scouting, and not one of you men says a word . . .

BORISOV: I thought about it, but it's easier for a woman to slip through. Don't forget we lost three men there.

SAFONOV: Yes, that's right . . . Have a smoke. Did you send for that writer?

BORISOV (*accepting cigarette, which he does not like*): Yes.

SAFONOV: Chief of our Intelligence Department for him. (*Enter VASIN. He is very tall and bearded. He wears a civilian overcoat, and carries a rifle efficiently.*)

VASIN: Good morning, Captain.

SAFONOV: You're Vasin? Hello, take a seat.

VASIN: I'm presenting myself in compliance with your orders.

SAFONOV (*looking him over*): What did you do here before the war?

VASIN: I taught military training in a technical college. When we were attacked I trained a detachment of students.

SAFONOV: How many students were lost in action?

VASIN (*soberly*): Every one . . . forty-three.

SAFONOV: Yes, the devil had all the good tunes those first few months. Smoke? (*Shots are heard.*)

VASIN (*taking a cigarette*): Thanks. (*VASIN strikes a match. BORISOV is about to light first, but SAFONOV pushes him aside and himself gallantly lights the old man's cigarette first.*) Thanks.

SAFONOV: I hear you were in the Russo-Japanese War, in the 1914 War, and in our Civil War too?

VASIN: That's so.

SAFONOV: Is it true that you were decorated during the last German War?

VASIN: Yes. Three St. Georges.

SAFONOV (*to BORISOV*): What kind of fire-eater is this? Didn't the Czar used to award the Cross of St. George for bravery?

VASIN: That's so.

SAFONOV: Well, Vasin . . . I want you to serve as my Chief of Staff. What do you think?

VASIN: Just as you command.

SAFONOV: All right, then I'll have the order posted up. How well do you know this town?

VASIN: Born here in 1879.

SAFONOV: Say, how's your health? Can you manage?

VASIN (*dryly*): I can manage. . . . If you've posted up the order of my appointment, I'll start about my duties.

SAFONOV: I'll do that right now. Did I hurt your feelings? (*To SHURA.*) Take this down, please: "Garrison Order No. 4—I hereby appoint as Chief of our Defense Line Staff . . ." (*To VASIN.*) What was your Army rank? (*Listens to distant machine-gun fire.*) Isn't that on the river?

VASIN: Yes, at the left ford.

SAFONOV: It's been quiet here all night. . . . Borisov, check with the outposts. Didn't Valya cross over at the ford?

SHURA: Yes, but it was quiet then too.

SAFONOV (*thoughtfully*): Yes . . . mmmmmm . . .

VASIN (*waiting*): You were asking . . .

SAFONOV: Yes . . . What was your old Army rank?

VASIN: In 1929 I was invalided with the rank of battalion commander.

SAFONOV: Battalion commander? No such rank today; that makes it major. Take this down, Shura. "Major A. V. Vasin."

VASIN: Pardon me, Captain; did you say Major, a rank above your own?

SAFONOV: Yes, old man, this is a time for promotion. Don't worry if we hold out till our main troops arrive, I'm sure they'll forgive us for these infringements. Any more objections, old man?

VASIN: No, sir. May I start on my duties now?

SAFONOV: As soon as you see the sector map in the next room. (*Checks himself.*) I haven't been out yet; is it cold this morning?

VASIN: Quite chilly, yes.

SAFONOV: I hope you drink vodka. (*After the old man drains his mug.*) I like you, old man.

VASIN (*with a faint smile*): I like you . . .

SAFONOV (*as they start for the door*): You're a man of few words, I see.

VASIN: That's true.

SAFONOV: I'm just the other way around, but listen—talk up if you think there's something to teach me.

VASIN: All right.

SAFONOV (*as they go out*): I'm a young dog who likes to learn old tricks.

VASIN: I'm an old dog who likes to learn new tricks. (*Sound of an airplane. PANIN enters. He gives SHURA a shy civilian bow.*)

PANIN: Good morning, Shura . . .

SHURA: Greetings, how're you?

PANIN (*with characteristic uneasiness*): Good. . . .

SHURA (*giving him a notebook*): I read it, Comrade Panin. A beautiful poem. Valya and I read it together the other night, and we both cried. When did you write it?

PANIN (*looking around uneasily*): I didn't write it. A good friend of mine wrote it. I don't write poetry.

SHURA: You talk as if you think it's a crime. . . .

PANIN (*confused*): No, no, but . . . Well, the Captain might. . . .

SHURA: But the Captain loves poetry. A few nights ago we stayed up late and lit the stove. We sat and drank tea and talked of the Comrades who are dead. The Captain lay down for an hour's sleep . . . and Valya and I read to each other and cried between the lines. When Valya got ready to leave for the other side, the Captain opened his eyes and asked me what we were reading. She read the poem to him and he didn't move. "Nice," he says. "Very nice." But I never saw him look so sad and upset before.

PANIN: You mean the Captain liked it?

SHURA: Of course he did.

PANIN (*in a whisper, holding up the book*): Then I'll tell you the truth. I did write this poem myself.

(SAFONOV *enters from the other room. PANIN immediately hides the book behind his back.*)

SAFONOV: Well, here's my writer. Good morning.

PANIN: Good morning.

SAFONOV (*briskly*): Pop outside for a minute, will you, Shura? (SHURA *goes out, snickering at PANIN's discomfort.*) What's that piggy squealing about?

PANIN: I don't know, Comrade Captain.

SAFONOV: Writer, this is the situation. I don't need writers just now, but our fighting forces are running short and we need you. Excuse me for not issuing an engraved invitation.

PANIN (*hesitantly*): I'm not the most practical man in the world, Comrade Captain. Firearms are not my strong point, but I'm willing to learn.

SAFONOV: Good, where's your wife?

PANIN (*vaguely*): She's somewhere beyond the Urals. I don't know just where.

SAFONOV (*touched*): Yes, she's far away, and you're right here. Remember Lermontov's poem? "And in my heart a face my eyes shall see no more."

PANIN: Oh, you know that?

SAFONOV: Listen, writer; are you resigned to the fact that you might

have to die right here in this town and not at home? And I mean today or tomorrow, not five years from now.

PANIN: It can be arranged.

SAFONOV: Good! Petrov died last night. You'll be my Intelligence Officer.

PANIN: Yes, but . . .

SAFONOV (*cutting him short*): A very dynamic situation! No one else is fitted for the job. But nothing soft! Forget you were ever a writer.

PANIN: Why do you keep calling me a writer? I'm a journalist.

SAFONOV: Journalist, then, forget it.

PANIN (*meehly*): I've forgotten it.

(VALYA enters. *She is tired and soaked to the skin.*)

VALYA: Comrade Captain . . .

SAFONOV (*rushing to her*): Say, what's the idea of driving us all crazy with anxiety!

VALYA: All your orders have been executed, Comrade Captain.

SAFONOV: Forget that for a moment! Don't you realize it's just as important to know if you are dead or alive? Who were they machine-gunning? You?

VALYA (*grimly*): Me.

SAFONOV: And you're chilled to the marrow! (*Calls.*) Shura! Shura!

VALYA: Allow me to make my report.

SAFONOV (*impatiently*): No reports just now! Get some dry clothes around your ribs!

VALYA: As soon as I've made my report!

SAFONOV: Did you hear what I said? Get into dry clothes!

VALYA: Did you hear what *I* said?!

SAFONOV (*giving way*): All right, Tiger. But hurry up . . . (*Sits drumming the table with fingers.*) Well, you were there.

VALYA: Yes.

SAFONOV: Handed over the message.

VALYA: Yes.

SAFONOV: Now, I've heard your report—go and dry your face!

VALYA: There's something else.

SAFONOV (*impatiently*): Well?

VALYA: Vasili's message: the Germans are getting supplies across the bridge—you'll have to blow it up.

SAFONOV: When?

VALYA: The sooner the better, he says.

SAFONOV (*momentarily taken aback*): That's a fine egg to hatch! (SHURA runs in and embraces VALYA.)

SHURA: Oh, Valyechka! Valyechka!

SAFONOV (*as VALYA starts for the door*): Just a minute, is there anything else?

VALYA (*at the door, with a touch of malice*): Excuse me, Comrade Captain, I have to change my clothes. (*Grins and leaves.*)

SAFONOV (*with a snort*): Damn young woman.

PANIN: Why "damn"?

SAFONOV: Stubborn!

PANIN: Ah, but that's good.

SAFONOV: Did I say it's bad? I said it with love, that "damn."

PANIN (*the poet awakening in him*): With love . . . ?

SAFONOV (*catching the other's intonation*): Compassionately, I mean. You think I don't worry just because I let a man risk death? It makes me anxious—he doesn't turn up for two days!

PANIN (*innocently*): Who's "he"?

SAFONOV (*explosively*): "She" then! Why are you nagging me, writer?

PANIN: Again "writer"?

SAFONOV (*grinning*): Excuse me, Comrade Soldier . . . (SOLDIER enters, gives *chit* to SAFONOV, who signs it. SOLDIER salutes.)

SOLDIER: Comrade Captain. (VASIN enters, wearing *knee boots and an old-fashioned type of tunic with leather buttons. A major's two-bar insigne is on his shoulders.*)

VASIN: Is there an extra sword belt hanging around, Comrade Captain?

SAFONOV: Yes, of course. There's certain to be a spare one around. (*Goes to VASIN and fingers his buttons with a smile.*) Ah, I remember

these. In 1925 our Red Army had this same kind of buttons. Remember, Panin?

PANIN: Yes, exactly the same. (*Strums guitar.*)

SAFONOV: Very fine buttons, too. (VALYA and SHURA enter. VALYA is wearing the Captain's breeches and knee boots. His fur-lined knee-coat is wrapped around her.)

VALYA: Ooh, Shura, the Captain's coat is nice and warm . . . so warm and lovely! Thank you, Comrade Captain.

(LIEUTENANT VASILYEV enters.)

LIEUTENANT VASILYEV: Lieutenant Tchbutikin to speak to the Captain on the phone.

SAFONOV (to VASIN): Come on, old man. You too, Chief of Intelligence. (*The three men leave the room.*)

VALYA: I didn't notice our guests. (*Snuggles on the sofa.*) Ooh, it's so warm and snug, this coat.

SHURA: He was terribly worried . . .

VALYA: Who was?

SHURA: The Captain was!

VALYA (*innocently*): But why?

SHURA (*archly*): Maybe you have some idea—why?

VALYA: Nope. Brr-rr, even in this coat I'm chilly. The water was full of icicles. You know, I'm almost sure I'll have to swim across again.

SHURA: No, really?

VALYA: Yes, I have a feeling . . .

SHURA: You mean to say he'd send you over again? I asked him to send me, but he wouldn't.

VALYA: Because I'm familiar with the ground and you're not.

SHURA: Then you'll have to go again. And he'll fret and worry again. Sometimes I watch him from the side—he must have been a genuine lady-killer before the war.

VALYA (*coolly*): He's not handsome.

SHURA: I don't suppose you like him . . .

VALYA: No.

SHURA: Could you learn to like him?

VALYA: Maybe . . . after the war.

SHURA: Do you realize what sort of war this can be?

VALYA: What sort can it be?

SHURA: Very long!

VALYA (*with a shrug*): I'm very patient, Shura.

SHURA: Well, I'm not! (*Silence. BORISOV and KOZLOVSKY enter, the latter in ragged civilian clothes.*)

BORISOV: Where's the Captain?

SHURA: Inside.

BORISOV (*to KOZLOVSKY*): Frozen, I suppose. Sit down—like some vodka?

KOZLOVSKY: Something for nothing—I can't refuse . . .

BORISOV: Shura, give this comrade a drink of vodka.

KOZLOVSKY (*drinking it*): That's good . . . very good. What are you looking at?

BORISOV: What do you expect? To be trusted by us, just because you swim across a river?

KOZLOVSKY: No, but after all the Germans fired on me—you saw it yourself—plain as day.

BORISOV: Right is right, that's why you're drinking vodka here. (*To SAFONOV, who enters.*) Captain, this man swam across from the German side to join us.

SAFONOV (*going to him*): Greetings . . . (*Shakes hands.*) Where do you come from?

KOZLOVSKY: I got through from around Nikolaev . . . I heard we were still holding the settlement here—encircled, but still holding. I thought to myself I'd better come here, so I just jumped in and swam across.

SAFONOV: You have no identification papers, I suppose?

KOZLOVSKY: Yes, I have.

SAFONOV: Smart working, hanging on to them.

KOZLOVSKY (*ripping open a sleeve*): The Party book is minus its cover, but the most important part is there, isn't it?

SAFONOV (*examining the soaked book*): Yes, it's here . . . what was your rank?

KOZLOVSKY: Junior Political Instructor Ivan Fyodorovich Vasilenko.

SAFONOV: That makes us namesakes, Ivan. Been warmed up?

KOZLOVSKY: Yes, thanks.

SAFONOV: We're short on water but there's plenty of vodka! But, on this special occasion, we'll have to make you a cup of tea. Shura!

SHURA: Right away.

SAFONOV: Sleepy?

KOZLOVSKY: Very. •

SAFONOV (*smiling and indicating the next room*): Go in and catch forty winks. You'll find a cot in there. When you wake up, we'll decide where to post you. I need every man available, and I hope you have no illusions about getting a furlough this week.

KOZLOVSKY (*smiling*): I'm a man without illusions. . . .

SAFONOV: Go on and get your tea then. (*KOZLOVSKY goes into the next room. VALYA is struggling with her memory.*)

VALYA: I know I've never seen his face, but his voice is very familiar.

SAFONOV (*laughing*): What do you mean, "familiar"? Like Chaliapin?

VALYA: I'm certain I've heard his voice before.

SAFONOV: Listen, Miss Certain, what are you doing running around? Don't you need some sleep, too?

VALYA: Yes.

SAFONOV: Catches sight of a handsome stranger, and right away she wants to know his name.

VALYA (*severely, going to the door*): Really, Comrade Captain, sometimes you're very childish. (*Goes out. He turns to BORISOV.*)

SAFONOV: Another worry in my life, now I'm childish. Borisov, tell the writer to drop in later and talk to this Vasilenko. He looks all right, but tell Panin to question him just to keep things straight. Do you know what really worries me? Where the hell can Globa be? Did he reach our main troops, or did he fail? You see I'm quite prepared to die for a reason, but why hold this miserable marsh if our troops never get here?

BORISOV: I have a feeling Globa didn't fail.

SAFONOV: You think he got through? Well, let's go and see the new

gun emplacement. (*They leave the main building. In a moment KOZLOVSKY enters, a cigarette paper between his fingers. He looks around shrewdly, moving from place to place. VASIN enters from the right.*)

KOZLOVSKY (*affably*): May I speak to you, Comrade Major?

VASIN: Why not?

KOZLOVSKY: I just broke through the encirclement . . . Perhaps, you can spare some tobacco for a cigarette, Comrade Major? (*As VASIN neatly spills tobacco into the other's hand, KOZLOVSKY raises his eyes.*) Comrade Major, I think I've seen you somewhere before.

VASIN (*quietly*): Excuse me, but what's your rank?

KOZLOVSKY: Junior Political Instructor Vasilenko.

VASIN: No, I've never seen you before, Political Instructor. Got some matches?

KOZLOVSKY (*dropping his eyes*): Yes, thanks . . . (*VASIN replaces the tin in his pocket and slowly walks out. In the silence KOZLOVSKY is alone. Now he faintly whistles with surprise.*) My own uncle! . . . Would you believe it?

CURTAIN

ACT ONE

SCENE THREE

Same as Scene Two.

SHURA is sitting behind a typewriter, her eyes swollen with crying. A SOLDIER is asleep on the bench, left center. PANIN enters, carrying a pistol which he regards speculatively. Shots are heard.

PANIN: Why are you crying, Shura?

SHURA: Nothing . . . nothing . . . (*She is unable to restrain her tears.*) Oh, if you only knew how sorry I am for poor Borisov.

PANIN (*shocked*): Borisov? Oh, Shura . . . but he was . . . and now he'll never play that guitar again. (*SHURA evades him and runs*

into another room, still weeping. The SOLDIER wakes and goes off-stage. In a moment VALYA enters, carrying a wrench and a file.)

VALYA: Hello, Comrade Panin.

PANIN: Yes . . . hello.

VALYA (*flopping into a seat and working on the wrench with her file*): What goes on, what goes on? I'm delivering bullets to the boys. Suddenly the enemy opens fire on my truck. Poor thing, she's punctured in every possible place! But not one bullet hit me.

PANIN: Is the truck done for too? (*A SOLDIER passes through, lugging a heavy case of shells.*)

VALYA: No, she still hobbles. I says, "Look here, Old Bus, better drop in for repairs." But, she looked at me with such appealing eyes that I didn't have the heart to retire her.

PANIN: Valya, didn't you drive Borisov, this morning?

VALYA: What do you do with men who won't listen? I tell him to let me drive through. "No," he says, "don't go any further, stay here; I'll go ahead on foot." I try to insist, but orders are orders! I remain and he goes ahead . . . (*Sadly, after a pause.*) I'm very sorry for him.

PANIN: What can you do? It can't be helped.

VALYA: I guess you've seen Shura. (*PANIN nods; VALYA lowers her voice.*) Don't say I said so, but it was all arranged between them, a wedding! They didn't want to wait till the war was over. It was all planned—for the 31st. And now, today, on the 30th, Borisov is killed. (*Turns to PANIN.*) Was Shura crying? (*PANIN nods.*) Well, now you know why she was crying.

PANIN (*after an intent look*): But, that's all untrue, Valya.

VALYA: What is?

PANIN: Everything you've just said. The wedding, the 31st—Borisov has a wife somewhere.

VALYA (*crying*): He has? . . . Well, I invented it. It sounds nicer that way . . . more romantic . . .

PANIN: Yes, it is better that way. (*After a momentary stroll.*) Valya, do you know how to take a gun apart?

VALYA: Of course.

PANIN (*admiringly*): You're a chauffeur who can do everything! (*Sits beside her.*) If you do me a favor and take my gun apart, I'll clean it with a rag. Can you imagine what happened last night! We were out beyond the suburb. Two of our boys looked as if they might turn and run away. Well, since I'm now the Chief of Intelligence, I gripped this gadget in my hand—and we all moved ahead!

VALYA (*drolly*): I know, the Captain told me. A very dynamic man, he said.

PANIN (*blushing*): But, he left out the most disgraceful part. A moment later, a Lieutenant next to me says, "Comrade Commissar, get someone to clean your gun. The muzzle's jammed with mud—it won't shoot."

VALYA (*laughing heartily as she takes the gun*): And, do you know what else I heard—about you?

PANIN: What?

VALYA: Instead of a pistol you carry cologne and a toothbrush in your holster!

PANIN (*sheepishly*): It was the most convenient place.

KOZLOVSKY (*entering*): Did you want me?

PANIN (*quietly, to VALYA*): Fix it for me, my dear . . . (*VALYA comes up to them, PANIN turns to the man.*)

PANIN: Yes, I sent for you.

KOZLOVSKY (*impertinently*): Why? Do you realize I had to leave the front line to come here?

PANIN (*quietly*): Nothing important. But I must tell you that the next time you shoot one of our soldiers without an order, I'll have you court-martialed! (*Goes toward table.*)

KOZLOVSKY: But the circumstances—after all, the circumstances! Lucky I fired—the rest would have turned back!

PANIN: Totally implausible, if I may say so! In brief, a lie! You're not a child, Vasilenko. You know the regulations.

KOZLOVSKY (*quietly*): Comrade Panin, I'm a very simple person. But what's the difference? Between ourselves, this is the end. Why waste talk about court-martials? I'll be killed, and so will you.

PANIN (*sternly*): That's quite beside the point! There's an Army here? Then, there's law here! Is that clear to you?

KOZLOVSKY (*with a smirk*): Quite . . .

PANIN: Then drop the blab about—what's the use and we're done for. It's downright decadent—enemy talk!

KOZLOVSKY (*protestingly*): Why, I'd face bullets any time of the day or night.

PANIN (*coldly*): Very possible, but it's no concern of mine. That's all. You may go. Well, Valya, finished yet? (KOZLOVSKY *goes out*.)

VALYA: In a minute, in a minute. (*Hands it over*.) Fit for a Commissar. (*Sound of a plane*.)

PANIN: Thank you. Come on, let's get started. (*Shots*.)

VALYA: Started where?

PANIN: You'll have to drive me to the Observation Post, but let's have it clearly understood you stay where I order you to wait. No hopping along in my tracks.

VALYA: Aye-aye, Comrade Commissar, no hopping along in your tracks.

PANIN: Maybe I'm not a military man, but don't you think I'm getting better every day? Let's go. (*They leave. In a moment VASIN and SAFONOV enter from another room*.)

SAFONOV: The main thing is to let the men get some sleep. Take Squad Three in the morning if you insist. But remember it's a dangerous post. Keep your head down.

VASIN (*with a faint smile*): It's a part of my duty . . . if we don't return, it will be easier for those who move ahead after us.

SAFONOV: I don't want to hear that kind of talk. We all have to move ahead together. Those are Stalin's words. Together. (*Reflectively*.) You know, Comrade, sometimes you don't believe one thing and sometimes another. But I believe him, I believe Stalin everywhere. I was in the hospital, wounded, when I heard his last radio speech. Dammit, if it wasn't addressed to me personally! You know what it said? "Stand firm, Safonov! Fight on, and stand firm! Not one step backward, Safonov! Suffer ten wounds, but stand firm! Die, but stand firm!"

VASIN (*moved but repressing his feeling*): You are carried away by your imagination, Ivan Nikitich.

SAFONOV: And so are you, you old faker. We Russians are an imaginative people; that's why we fight so well.

VASIN: My friend, I was punctured six times in the last German war. In this one, I haven't been wounded once. That means six little punctures are waiting for me, but I'll still be alive and kicking.

SAFONOV: I hope so, old man. You know— (*A TELEPHONE OPERATOR enters as an airplane is heard.*)

TELEPHONE OPERATOR: Squad Two on the line, Captain. They want the spare machine gun. (*Sound of shots.*)

SAFONOV: I'll speak to them. (*Exit. KOZLOVSKY enters.*)

KOZLOVSKY: How do you do, Comrade Major.

VASIN: Hello.

KOZLOVSKY: Where is the Captain?

VASIN: He'll be back.

KOZLOVSKY (*after a pause*): But where was it I saw you before, Comrade Major?

VASIN: I told you. I don't remember.

KOZLOVSKY: Maybe not, but I know I saw you.

VASIN: Possible.

KOZLOVSKY: Did you ever live in Nikolaev?

VASIN: From 1923 to 1929.

KOZLOVSKY: Maybe that's where.

VASIN: Maybe. But what do you want here now?

KOZLOVSKY: I came for ammunition—it's a matter for the Captain.

VASIN: I can attend to it. Rifle cartridges?

KOZLOVSKY: Yes.

VASIN: I'll let you have two hundred. (*Writes a memorandum.*) Get them from Ivanov.

KOZLOVSKY (*taking the chit*): But doesn't this need the Captain's signature?

VASIN: No.

KOZLOVSKY: Then you're actually the senior Chief here? I'm glad to hear that!

VASIN (*angrily*): Captain Safonov is the Chief of the Garrison and I am his Chief of Staff—you should be aware of that by now!

KOZLOVSKY: Of course, but I only said that because I was surprised at the difference in your ranks.

VASIN: But what surprises me, Comrade Political Instructor, is the difference between your rank and your thoughts! And the discrepancy between the great amount you talk and the little bit you do, especially here at the front.

KOZLOVSKY (*sitting down*): But Comrade Major, I never for a minute supposed—

VASIN: Stand up when addressed by your senior! (KOZLOVSKY *risés*.) You may go now. (SAFONOV *enters*.)

SAFONOV: What's the fight about?

VASIN: There is no question of a fight, Comrade Captain; I just dropped a remark to the Junior Political Instructor. (*He bows and goes out.*)

SAFONOV: What's the idea, Vasilenko? Don't you dare let me catch you fighting with the old man again!

KOZLOVSKY: What did I do? I spoke to him simple and straightforward-like. But he seems to be of the intelligentsia.

SAFONOV (*angrily*): What do you mean, of the intelligentsia? Are you proud of your ignorance? From what I can see, five years' polish in a university wouldn't do you any harm. I won't have anyone offending that old man. Why, before you were off your hands and knees, he'd already won three Georges in action against the Germans. Do you understand that?

KOZLOVSKY: Yes, I do . . .

SAFONOV: What did you come here for?

KOZLOVSKY: Cartridges, but he didn't give me enough. Look—

SAFONOV (*coldly*): I don't have to look. If that's all my Chief of Staff gave you, that's all he could spare, and don't you start any more monkey-tricks around here. Now, leave. (KOZLOVSKY *goes out*. *Outside there is a commotion*. GLOBA's voice is heard above the rest.)

GLOBA: What is this? Refusing to let me in? (GLOBA *enters*, followed by a SENTRY.)

SENTRY: He wants to see you, Comrade Captain. Will I let him pass?

CAPTAIN: Why, it's Globa himself!

GLOBE: Himself in person . . . (*The two men embrace. The SENTRY retires.*)

SAFONOV: Globy, my rooster, is it really you?

GLOBE: It's really me.

SAFONOV: Alive?

GLOBE (*joyfully*): Every finger, every toe! Every ear, every nose!

SAFONOV: Not a ghost?

GLOBE: Ghost be damned! I'm hungry enough to eat a horse!

SAFONOV: Now I'm convinced. (*Calls.*) Shura, Globa's back. (*To GLOBE.*) Come on, sit down. (*SHURA enters.*)

SHURA: Greetings . . .

GLOBE: Greetings, Shurichka; my dearest dear.

SAFONOV: Why don't you dance for joy? Can't you see he's alive?

GLOBE: They're never glad to see me. My frankness makes them mad.

SAFONOV: Hurry up; bring him something to eat. (*SHURA goes and the two men go to the table and sit down.*)

SAFONOV: Well, you were there?

GLOBE: Yes.

SAFONOV: What's the plan?

GLOBE: A big advance is being prepared.

SAFONOV: You mean, we may be relieved from this encirclement?

GLOBE: Could be . . .

SAFONOV (*enthusiastically*): Oh, Globa, how I long just to be alive. The others, myself, just alive, and this war all behind us. (*SHURA enters. Puts tray of food on table and exits.*) So, that's the news. Our main troops are preparing to take the offensive.

GLOBE: That's the news. I saw a general while I was there—he sends you his best regards: "Safonov? I know him well," he said.

SAFONOV: Knows me well? Couldn't be. No generals in my address book.

GLOBE: He says he knows you well—his name's Lukonin.

SAFONOV: Lukonin! Do you mean to say he's a general already?

GLOBA (*chewing food*): Full-blown General, uniform and all!

SAFONOV: Would you believe that! Well, Globa, everything is going to be all right. *That* General will reach us. I know him. When he says he'll do a thing, he does it.

GLOBA: That was my impression of him, too.

SAFONOV: What did you tell him?

GLOBA: Per orders, I asked them to send us help. Unless it interfered with their plans, I said—then we don't want it. You know, we want to live, I said . . . That sort of thing.

SAFONOV (*following him*): You told them that . . .

GLOBA: Yes, but they sort of understand what the feeling is like.

SAFONOV: What are their orders to us?

GLOBA: Sealed dispatches being impractical, verbal orders were to hold out . . . hold out . . . and hold out! As to the how's and why's, your General's sending us a Liaison Officer by plane . . .

SAFONOV (*disappointed*): Dammit, is that all! Nothing else?

GLOBA: Nothing else. The how's and why's, I think, will be decided somewhere higher up. That General friend of yours didn't want to fog up our brains. "Just tell Safonov to remember his old bunkmate and hang on," he said.

SAFONOV (*curbing his disappointment*): Have a hard job getting through?

GLOBA (*casually*): I always sort of manage somehow. . . . And what's the news here, Ivan Nikitich?

SAFONOV: News? Krolov died of his wounds the night you left. Petrov too. . . . Well, that leaves me acting as both Commander and Commissar. And Borisov was killed this morning.

GLOBA (*moved, pushing his plate away*): They may need me at the hospital. I'd better go over.

SENTRY (*at the door*): Some civilians to see you, Comrade Captain.

SAFONOV: Let them in. (*To GLOBA with a grimace.*) I forgot to mention, I'm Chief of the Garrison, too. It's what the poets call "having your hands full." (*An old man enters. An even older friend follows.*)

OLD MAN: I came to make a request, Comrade Commander.

SAFONOV: A request? I'm about fed up with these requests . . .

OLD MAN: Not only for myself, but for several others.

SAFONOV: Well, what is it you want? Is it about food?—I gave you all I could. Equal rations all around, for you and for us.

OLD MAN: No, not that . . .

SAFONOV: Water?—the same applies to water. I know, I know. You're an old man and I respect your age, but the same goes for everyone.

OLD MAN: No, it's not water.

SAFONOV: What is it about?

OLD MAN: Rifles . . . we'd like to have rifles, if you don't mind.

SAFONOV: What on earth do you want with rifles?

OLD MAN: What do you use rifles for?

SAFONOV: Are all your friends as old as you?

OLD MAN: Yes. But all of us fought in the last German War or the Japanese. (SAFONOV *exchanges glances with* GLOBA.) In the Japanese War I fought. In 1914 I was too old. But nowadays I'm growing younger every week—and now, if you don't mind, what about those rifles?

SAFONOV (*haughtily*): Old man, do you know you can make a man cry? I've been a trouble-shooter for years, drove trucks through the Urals, fought this war on every front! And now you've the gall to make me cry! (*Rubs an eye.*) All right, you'll get your rifles, you old criminal! But come back at eight when my Chief of Staff is here. You can have a good chat together, you veterans! (*The old men leave.*) Well, Globa, this is the picture here: We're in the dark as to when and where our main troops will strike. That means we have to project our own plans. (*Drops his voice.*) Hand-in-glove with guerrillas over there in the German part of the town, we're blowing up the bridge behind the German lines. That leaves me no choice but to send Valya over again tomorrow night.

GLOBA (*sympathetically*): With regrets?

SAFONOV (*nodding*): That's the plan . . .

GLOBA: For my part, Ivan, I look at things more simply. Death faces you—that's a fact. Man needs happiness! That's another fact!

Then why not take it while you're still alive? She's a splendid girl, and everything'll turn out all right.

SAFONOV: No, forget it. I'm worried about her, that's all.

GLOBA: But, aren't you worried about yourself?

SAFONOV: About myself? I certainly am. But, it's different with us, Globa. We can't permit ourselves to be afraid. If we did, others would follow us. That means we have got to be fearless. Except perhaps at night under our blankets, when we have the blankets. (*VALYA enters wearily and sees GLOBA.*)

VALYA (*in surprise*): Globa!

GLOBA (*warmly*): Valyechka!

VALYA (*indifferently*): Are you here again?

SAFONOV (*laughing*): Didn't you bring Panin back?

VALYA (*flopping into a seat*): No, he stayed there.

SAFONOV: Stayed where?

VALYA: With Squad One. Lord, I'm tired out!

SAFONOV (*to GLOBA*): What can you do about it? Ever since I appointed that damn intellectual Chief of Intelligence, he's been busy showing us he's not afraid. But everyone has known that from the start.

VALYA: I kept him back as much as I could.

SAFONOV: You kept him back! I know how you kept him back! Rushes in who-knows-where and then screams she—kept him back! (*LIEUTENANT VASILYEV comes to the doorway.*)

LIEUTENANT VASILYEV: Outpost Three on the phone, Comrade Captain.

SAFONOV: Coming. (*He goes.*)

GLOBA (*slyly*): How are you getting on, Valyechka?

VALYA (*coldly*): Same as ever . . . like everyone else.

GLOBA: And, how is everyone else getting on?

VALYA (*nonchalantly*): Each in his own way.

GLOBA: Hard times, these! (*Vigorously.*) Just imagine, women at the front! Personally, I'd keep you safe, all of you, my dear, so that you'd always be around to make our life pleasanter.

VALYA (*scornfully*): Do you think that's all we have to do—just always be around to make you happy?

GLOBA (*lifting an eyebrow*): Why not? War's a serious matter, my dear—here today, gone tomorrow. Then why not make what remains of life as pleasant as we can?

VALYA (*jumping to her feet*): Then, in your opinion, life is like a Christmas tree to be hung with toys.

GLOBA: Could be. . . . But I'm not referring to you. You're a serious-minded girl. You even find it boring to talk to me. But I still believe that woman is the decoration of life.

VALYA (*her eyes blazing*): Oh, I dislike you for that kind of talk.

GLOBA: But it isn't necessary that you like me. (SAFONOV *enters*.)

SAFONOV: What's the noise?

GLOBA: A charming discussion on the role of women in the present era. I'll look in at the hospital, Ivan, but I'll be back. The most unexpected surprises occur in hospitals. You've been gone seven days, for instance, and the ones you expected to see alive, they're dead. And the ones you knew would die, they're alive. Yes, could be! (*He goes. A pause follows. SAFONOV crosses the room and studies the map, then sighs heavily.*)

VALYA: Feeling tired?

SAFONOV: Sometimes I forget that I'm alive.

VALYA: Yes, I've noticed that.

SAFONOV: Yes, my little Blue Bell of the Steppes, this is more of a job than twisting your steering wheel.

VALYA: You see, as soon as you're Chief, you begin jeering.

SAFONOV (*jokingly*): Yes, looking down from the exalted pedestal of my high post. Not that brains aren't needed at the steering wheel—like yesterday.

VALYA: What about yesterday?

SAFONOV: It nearly broke my heart the way you ground the gears.

VALYA: I didn't grind them. Not at all. I drove very well.

SAFONOV: Oh, did you, my dear?

VALYA: Yes, I did, my dear! You men!

SAFONOV: Did not. I'm gentle with you, but don't try to twist my nose.

VALYA: I'm not trying to twist your nose, Comrade Captain, but I drove well. And once I'm at the wheel, I'm chief of the car, and I'll drive you in my own peculiar way! Understand?

SAFONOV: Yes, but don't look at me with those eyes. You'll frighten me and I'll run away.

VALYA (*softening*): And now I suggest you get some sleep. You haven't slept for days.

SAFONOV: How do you know? You weren't there.

VALYA: Since I asked, I know.

SAFONOV: You asked?

VALYA (*annoyed*): Yes, in passing I asked.

SAFONOV (*more serious now*): But you didn't ask this, Valya: tonight or tomorrow, you'll have to cross to the German side again.

VALYA (*readily*): Good!

SAFONOV: What's good about it? There's no one else to send, or I'd never send you a third time.

VALYA: Why not?

SAFONOV (*with a trace of annoyance*): I just wouldn't, that's all. And, in general, don't ask your Chief so many questions. (*Drops his voice.*) You'll meet Vasili again. We'll take care of blowing up the bridge, tell him.

VALYA: Good.

SAFONOV: Give him all the details. Where, when, and how.

VALYA: Good.

SAFONOV: But nothing on paper. Everything in your mind.

VALYA: Good.

SAFONOV (*explosively*): What's good about it? You're crossing a third time because your country needs it. (*Then contritely after a pause.*) You see, how I talk to you?

VALYA: My country! When most people speak of their motherland, their country, they think of something vast and limitless. It's different with me. Our little hut in Novo Nikolaevsk used to stand on the edge of a village, near a stream with two birch trees on the bank . . . I

used to hang a swing on those trees . . . and when I hear people speak of their great motherland, the two trees are all I remember. Is that wrong?

SAFONOV: No, it's right.

VALYA: And, then I see my mother and brother standing near the trees. It makes me remember how we saw my brother off to Moscow to study . . . I recollect the station, the road . . . and Moscow comes back to me and everything, everything! And then I suddenly wonder what started all those thoughts, the two birch trees on the bank. It must be wrong, Ivan.

SAFONOV: No, my dear, not wrong, at all. Each of us remembers in his own way. (*After a pause.*) I was in the country the night war was declared. All night I felt uneasy. A bell kept ringing somewhere. A child was crying in a house. . . . A man and woman were walking down the street, and I heard them laugh. And then came the news of the German attack! My one feeling was to get back to town, to people—to stand beside my mother. . . . Tell my mother I hope to see her soon, to take care of herself—not to get too huffy with the Germans—we need her. No news, tell her—a tooth fell out, that's the only news.

VALYA: I'll tell her.

SAFONOV: There's something I'd like to tell you. (*Changes his mind.*) But it can wait until you get back.

VALYA: Say I don't get back?

SAFONOV: If you don't get back, it would have no sense to tell you. (*Covering himself with his Army coat SAFONOV lies on the couch with open eyes.*)

VALYA: That's right. It's good to sleep.

SAFONOV: I've lost my appetite for sleep.

VALYA: Try anyway; I'll sing you a song.

SAFONOV: What song?

VALYA: One they sing to children, a lullaby. (*She begins to sing an old Russian lullaby. After a moment she breaks off, seeing that he is watching intently.*)

VALYA (*suddenly made self-conscious*): Why don't you get a shave?

SAFONOV: I'll shave when you get back.

VALYA: And if I don't, you'll never shave? (*Gets no answer.*) Then, I simply must get back.

SAFONOV: I can't sleep.

VALYA: And my song doesn't help?

SAFONOV: No. (*There is a pause, SAFONOV closes his eyes, and instantly falls asleep; VALYA is unaware of this.*)

VALYA (*quietly*): Really, Comrade Captain, I'm not afraid of the Germans. I'll cross the river and soon be back, and then you can shave. Why are you so quiet? . . . (*She turns and sees he has fallen asleep. She quietly moves to the couch and begins to draw his coat over him; afraid to wake him, she desists, but looks tenderly at his passive face. Speaks softly.*) Uh-hmm, lost his appetite for sleep.

(*Far away only the faint rat-a-tat of machine guns breaks the silence.*)

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

At the home of KHARITONOV—the old, sturdily built house of a provincial private doctor. A large dining room evidently serving now as general room; several doors. Two wall closets, one with crockery and the other painted white, evidently holding medical supplies.

ROSENBERG and WERNER are sitting at a tea table. WERNER, at right of table, is sipping wine from a goblet and looking at a book. The other, at left, is opening a zipper suitcase and placing various souvenirs before him, photographs, documents, etc.

ROSENBERG: Still working on your Russian lessons, Werner?

WERNER: Ja.

ROSENBERG: That's good. We shall be here for quite a time.

WERNER: A long war, you think?

ROSENBERG: No, it won't be long. After the war, I mean. The con-

queror may well despise the conquered, but he should know their language, even if he has to bark like a dog to learn it. Werner, never trust anybody in a foreign country.

WERNER: But I see you trust the doctor here.

ROSENBERG: Ja, but he is a scoundrel. If the Russians come back they will hang him. But his wife—her I do not trust. (*Sorts out photographs.*) Krause gave me another suitcase full of these souvenirs today. Why do you look at me that way?

WERNER (*rising*): You have the habits of an old-clothes man. (*He moves across the room.*)

ROSENBERG: Ja, I love to rummage. But by these photographs and identification papers I study the local customs. Here, for instance, are the identification papers of Lieutenant N. S. Kharitonov. This document is punctured by a bullet. Kharitonov was evidently killed. The name is the same as our host's. I know he has a son in the army, and so I assume for the moment that this is his son. A most interesting psychological experiment could be built up on it.

KHARITONOV (*at door*): Did you call me?

ROSENBERG: No. (*KHARITONOV starts away.*) But since you're here—where is your wife from, Doctor?

KHARITONOV (*nervously*): My wife? From Vologda.

ROSENBERG: You see, Werner, she is from Vologda and we haven't captured Vologda yet. (*To KHARITONOV.*) Has she some relatives?

KHARITONOV (*in confusion*): Relatives? . . . Yes. Sisters.

ROSENBERG: Sisters. And the sisters must have husbands, no? And maybe, unlike you, they are men of Russia, no?

KHARITONOV: I fail to understand you, Herr Kapitän.

ROSENBERG (*rising*): You understand me perfectly. Tell your wife to bring in the samovar. (*Exit KHARITONOV.*) You see, Werner, her sisters have husbands. Now maybe one of them is an officer. And maybe he comes through here soon. What is she going to do? Well, she would sooner let him kill us than us him. It's all so very simple. (*MARIA NIKOLAEVNA enters with the tea things. She puts cups on the table.*) Tell me, Madame, have your sisters any husbands?

MARIA: Yes, Herr Kapitän.

ROSENBERG: Russians?

MARIA: Yes. Milk?

ROSENBERG: Un-huh. Don't you envy them because their husbands are Russians?

MARIA: Mine is Russian too.

ROSENBERG: Don't pretend that you fail to understand me.

MARIA: Shall I bring in the samovar?

ROSENBERG (*standing*): Bring it in—we'll soon be ready for tea. (MARIA goes to the table, picks up wine bottle and glass, and takes them away. The GERMANS go into their room. MARIA NIKOLAEVNA enters, followed by her husband. Several shots ring out in the street. MARIA crosses herself, goes to sofa, and sits down.)

KHARITONOV: What are you crossing yourself for?

MARIA: For them, for our boys.

KHARITONOV (*in a low voice*): When will you learn to be careful.

MARIA: For thirty years I've been trying.

KHARITONOV (*after a pause*): Did you visit Martha Safonova?

MARIA: Yes.

KHARITONOV: And you told her everything I said?

MARIA: Yes, but it's repulsive to me.

KHARITONOV: And suppose I'm killed? Will that be less repulsive to you? Now tomorrow go around to see her again. You hear me? I'm sick and tired of the Germans, tell her. I don't like them, tell her—it made me sick when they appointed me their Mayor. You hear me, Maria?

MARIA: What is the point of all this?

KHARITONOV: The point is that it's all true. The point is that I'd rather hide in a cellar than tremble for my throat. In Kherson the Mayor was killed by guerrillas. I don't want him killed in this town, because in this town it means me!

MARIA: Good God! Instead of all this horror, why don't we leave? Why don't we abandon all our things and run away and hide somewhere?

KHARITONOV (*in a hissing, angry tone*): Hide where? And my things. And what about my things? Without me my things will still

be things—but without them I'd be so much trash. Yes, trash and nothing more. (*Someone knocks at the door.*) Open the door. (*MARIA goes out and quickly returns with MARTHA SAFONOVA, who is beside herself with angry indignation.*)

MARTHA: Oh, the brutes! the monsters!

KHARITONOV: Shh, shh!

MARTHA: They murdered her. Before my very eyes they murdered her!

KHARITONOV (*nervously*): Whom did they murder?

MARTHA: Tanya, my neighbor Tanya. At first I thought, the hell with you. But you're a doctor and her labor pains began. I was bringing her here. Now she's under your window, lying there!

KHARITONOV: Please, not so loud. Please, why am I to blame?

MARTHA: In every way. Didn't you sign the five o'clock curfew order? Didn't you sign it—anyone seen on the streets after then to be shot?

KHARITONOV: No, it was the Kommandant, not me.

MARTHA: No, it was you! You were the one! You!!

(*At her shouts ROSENBERG emerges from the next room and stands in the doorway.*)

ROSENBERG: Who is that shouting?

MARTHA (*turning to ROSENBERG*): It's me shouting! Why was a woman killed in the middle of the streets?

ROSENBERG: Who is this woman?

KHARITONOV (*confused*): She's one of the— They were coming to see me. Her neighbor was in labor pain. The patrol shot at them.

ROSENBERG: Nobody is permitted in the streets after five P.M. Is that not correct?

KHARITONOV: Yes, of course . . .

ROSENBERG: Then to be shot in the streets after five o'clock is in perfect order. Women are no exceptions, or anyone else. And you will be placed under arrest and tried for breaking the law!

MARTHA: Have me tried by your court! Kill me like you did her! (*Advancing on him.*) I could choke you with these naked hands! . . .

ROSENBERG (*turning in the doorway*): Werner! Call the guards

on duty. (*Calmly to MARTHA.*) I think we shall have to hang you.

MARTHA: Then hang me!

ROSENBERG (*to KHARITONOV*): What is her name?

KHARITONOV: Safonova.

ROSENBERG: She has someone in the army? Sons? Husband?

KHARITONOV: Umm . . . maybe . . .

MARTHA: Yes, sons! Husband! All of them in the army!

ROSENBERG: Yes, we shall have to hang you. Take her away.

MARIA (*suddenly running to MARTHA and embracing her*): No—No. Then hang me too. I have a son in the army—I hate you! I hate you!

KHARITONOV: Maria, you—

MARIA: And you, too! I hate every one of you, you torturers. Yes, we're old friends and we both have sons in the war! Yes! . . . (*MARIA shakes with sobs. Enter SOLDIERS. After a moment ROSENBERG points to MARTHA.*)

ROSENBERG: Take that woman . . . let the other one go.

KHARITONOV: Thank you, Herr Kapitän—she won't do that again.

MARTHA: Thank him, thank him, you Judas! Grovel at his feet! (*As the SOLDIERS take her arms, she continues, to KHARITONOV.*) I'd spit in the German's face, but you deserve it more! (*She spits at him as the SOLDIERS drag her out. Powerless, MARIA sobs.*)

KHARITONOV: Herr Kapitän, take no notice. She—she's a nervous woman. They were childhood friends—

ROSENBERG: It's quite all right, Doctor. In view of your services to us, I forgive your wife. (*Deliberately addresses MARIA.*) How could I ever forget the work you've done for us? The list of seventeen Bolsheviks which you drew up for us, for instance. Or the names of five more you gave us yesterday. As I remember, it was you who told us where to locate the Chief of the Militia. And it was you who— But why continue with what seems to upset your wife? There, there, go and pacify the woman. (*ROSENBERG goes into the next room, leaving silence behind him.*)

MARIA (*finally*): All that was true?

KHARITONOV: Yes. And you can thank God that you're still alive after what you've done!

MARIA (*moving toward KHARITONOV and speaking quietly*): Who wants to be alive? You think it matters to me? If it were not for my son . . . I'd be glad to die . . . (*Enter ROSENBERG and WERNER.*)

ROSENBERG: Madame, don't forget the tea. (MARIA goes out.)

WERNER (*speaking in a low voice to ROSENBERG*): We shall now conduct our experiment. (*To KHARITONOV.*) Doctor!

KHARITONOV: Yes, Herr Kapitän?

ROSENBERG: I trust that you are sincerely loyal to us, Doctor?

KHARITONOV: Certainly, Herr Kapitän.

ROSENBERG: And those who fight us, they are your enemies, too?

KHARITONOV: Yes, Herr Kapitän.

ROSENBERG: Be more precise, Doctor.

KHARITONOV: Enemies, Herr Kapitän.

ROSENBERG: And when we kill them, you'll be glad?

KHARITONOV: I should, Herr Kapitän.

ROSENBERG: Be more precise—"I'll be glad."

KHARITONOV: I'll be glad . . . Herr Kapitän.

ROSENBERG: I hope your wife was lying when she said your son was fighting us.

KHARITONOV: I regret it is true, Herr Kapitän. We are not on speaking terms. But he is in the army.

ROSENBERG: To your great regret?

KHARITONOV: Yes, Herr Kapitän, to my great regret.

ROSENBERG: But your regrets would be at an end if he were not in the army?

KHARITONOV: Yes . . .

ROSENBERG: Come a bit closer then. (KHARITONOV moves closer. ROSENBERG shows him the photograph.) Is this face familiar to you?

KHARITONOV: Yes, that's Nikolai, my son.

ROSENBERG: I see it is. (*Reveals the entire document.*) Doctor, the bullet puncture through these identification papers brings your regrets to an end. Now you can be content: your son is no longer in the army. (KHARITONOV remains speechless.) Well, aren't you pleased, Doctor?

WERNER: Rosenberg!

ROSENBERG (*turning to him, coldly*): Ja? . . . (*To KHARITONOV.*)

Then you aren't pleased with this, Doctor? (*Harshly.*) Yes or no?

KHARITONOV (*in a choked voice*): Yes . . . pleased. . . .

ROSENBERG: So you see, Werner, the Doctor is pleased. And we had no ground whatsoever to doubt him. Everything is lucid and clear—you may go now, Doctor. Thank you.

WERNER: Say, what's all this comedy for? If the man's got to be shot, shoot him! Or if you're a neurasthenic and can't do it yourself, tell me—I'll shoot him quick! What you're doing is far from soldier-like.

ROSENBERG: My sweet Werner, your views are out of date. It is our duty to study local morals and customs.

WERNER: Look here, I'm fed up with you and your study of local customs, and your idiotic conversations make me sick!

ROSENBERG: Won't you have some tea?

WERNER (*going*): No!

(KHARITONOV *out of sheer weakness leans against the door lintel.* MARIA *brings in the samovar.*)

KHARITONOV (*quietly*): Maria . . . listen, Maria . . . I want to tell you . . . I want to tell you that . . . (*Exit.*)

MARIA (*to ROSENBERG across the room*): The tea will be brewed in a minute.

ROSENBERG (*holding the son's papers in his hands*): It appears you had a son in the army. . . .

MARIA: I *have* a son in the army.

ROSENBERG: No, you *had* a son in the army. Or as your husband says, "I regret my son *was* in the Army." Is it clear—he was, but he isn't.

MARIA: What—what are you saying?

ROSENBERG: Now, please don't imagine for a moment that I had anything to do with this. I would never treat a mother so cruelly. This fell into my hands by sheer accident. (*Gives it to her.*) And that's why I say you *had* a son. (MARIA *grips the paper in her hand, looks at it with a stunned expression, and slowly sinks into a chair at the table. She is stupefied. After a pause, ROSENBERG speaks to her again.*) Your husband said he was pleased. That's the only reason I showed

it to you, knowing how you share his feelings. (MARIA *remains silent.*) Why are you silent? That's exactly what the doctor said. (He calls.) Doctor! (KHARITONOV *enters.*) Doctor, didn't you say you were pleased . . . ? (MARIA *lifts her head and stares at the silent DOCTOR.*) You mean you were not pleased? Not telling the truth? (KHARITONOV *remains silent.* MARIA *wordlessly puts the paper on the table and stands up, speaking in a toneless automatic voice.*)

MARIA: I will go and brew the tea.

ROSENBERG: Ah, that's good. Thank you. Sit down, Doctor. (MARIA, *behind the men's backs, teapot in hand, goes first to one closet and next to the closet with the medical supplies. After rummaging there for a moment, she returns to table.* ROSENBERG and KHARITONOV *sit at table.*)

MARIA: Here is the tea.

ROSENBERG: Won't you kindly pour it? It's much more pleasant for a soldier when a woman pours the tea. Madame, please pour your husband some tea. (MARIA *looks at her husband. Then, with the same automatic movements, she pours some tea for him.* ROSENBERG *speaks to KHARITONOV, watchfully.*) Well, Doctor?

KHARITONOV: Please excuse me, Herr Kapitän. I am not feeling well . . . I really could not . . .

ROSENBERG: Just as you please, then.

MARIA (*listlessly*): Anything else you want, Herr Kapitän?

ROSENBERG: No, thank you. (ROSENBERG *goes out, taking his tea with him.* KHARITONOV *is seated on the couch, head dropped on his hands.* In the silence MARIA *stands at the wall.*)

KHARITONOV (*finally*): Maria . . . I can't stand it any more . . .

MARIA: Leave me alone. Don't speak to me.

KHARITONOV: Let's forget everything, Maria, and leave. Anywhere . . . Let's run away somewhere.

MARIA: Now too late . . . you can't imagine how late it is, how late. (The loud scraping of a chair is heard from the next room. The door is flung open and ROSENBERG rushes into the room and halts abruptly.)

ROSENBERG: What did you— You poisoned this tea with what,

you— (*He falls face forward on the floor and writhes in convulsions. MARIA stands immobile.*)

KHARITONOV: What's wrong? What's the matter . . . ? (*He runs to ROSENBERG and tries to lift him. Then he turns and looks at the silent unconcerned MARIA standing at the wall. WERNER enters stiffly; he bends over ROSENBERG, lifts a limp hand and lets it fall.*)

WERNER: Who did this?

MARIA (*quietly*): We did. My husband and I poisoned him.

KHARITONOV (*still on his knees*): No, Herr Kapitän, she's lying. We didn't do this!

MARIA: We did it! We did it! Stand up! (*Goes to him and lifting him under the arms.*) Stand up! Stand up on your feet this time! (*Quickly, to WERNER.*) Yes, we did it—both of us!

KHARITONOV: Herr Werner! Herr Werner!

WERNER: I don't suppose you expect a trial!

KHARITONOV: She did the whole thing—it wasn't me! (*Sits down.*)
Not me!

MARIA: *We*, it was *we*! You killed our boy. And we poisoned that snake of yours! We hate you to death.

WERNER: You won't get a trial. Right here and now—you're going to be hanged by your God-damned necks!! (*Opening the street door and calling.*) Hey there! Meller! (*MARIA presses her husband to her. He is crazed with fear. She leans against the wall and cries out.*)

MARIA: Hang us! Yes, oh God,—hang us, hang us!!

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE TWO

The bank of a river, by night. Trees. A path descending to the water's edge. A SENTRY moves across the scene. A moment later VALYA and SAFONOV enter together. They are heavily dressed. The night is cold. The SENTRY whirls around and levels his rifle in their direction.

SENTRY: Who is there?

SAFONOV: Captain Safonov. Has Ivanov shown up yet? (*The SENTRY drops his gun.*)

SENTRY: Not yet, Captain.

SAFONOV: How is it tonight?

SENTRY: Quiet, Comrade Captain.

SAFONOV: The telephone line fixed yet?

SENTRY: Not yet, Comrade Captain. (*SAFONOV indicates he may go; the SENTRY salutes with his gun and goes. There is a moment of silence.*)

SAFONOV: Are you cold, Valya?

VALYA: No, are you?

SAFONOV: I've been warmer in my life . . . Cold and silent . . . you'd never know a thousand German eyes were over there, across the river. Be careful, Valya; watch out for snipers.

VALYA: Don't worry about me. . . .

SAFONOV (*looking at his wrist watch*): Ivanov will escort you to your crossing point. He'll be here any minute.

VALYA: A watch that tells time in the dark? That's interesting.

SAFONOV: I bought it in Ulan Bator, a long time ago.

VALYA: Bator? Where's that?

SAFONOV: The capital of Mongolia, far, far away. I'll have to leave you now. I'm busy. You didn't forget the fuse and detonators?

VALYA: They're strapped around my waist. (*Quickly.*) That phrase, "Far away," always excites me. Did you ever see the ocean? (*SAFONOV nods.*) What is it like, Comrade Captain? Water wherever you look?

SAFONOV: Water wherever you look. The waves come and go, sea birds cry . . . an endlessly dull affair.

VALYA: I once read a story where two lovers meet secretly on the beach. Her father discovers them and takes her far away. The man sits on a rock until the tide comes in over his head. Or else she took another man, I can't remember. (*Timidly.*) Have you ever been in love, Comrade Captain?

SAFONOV: Love? No, I'm waiting for them to perfect the invention. (*With assumed briskness.*) Now, watch yourself, Valya. You're one

of my reconnaissance experts by now—we can't afford to lose you. (*Awkwardly.*) So, I'll say good-bye. . . . (*She takes his proffered hand. Grasping her hand, he forgets to release it.*)

VALYA: Comrade Captain . . .

SAFONOV: Yes . . . ?

VALYA: You're squeezing my hand!

SAFONOV (*hastily dropping the hand*): Excuse me, Army Scout . . .

VALYA (*disappointed*): Am I always Army Scout to you?

SAFONOV (*with a wry smile*): Sometimes you're Comrade Chauffeur.

VALYA: But that isn't answering my question.

SAFONOV (*uneasily*): Your question answers itself.

VALYA (*proudly*): All right, if you feel that way!

SAFONOV: Valya, dear, don't you confuse me with woman talk. When you return—

VALYA: I don't mean to confuse you, Comrade Captain. But suppose I don't return?

SAFONOV: If you don't return . . . I . . . but this is not the time for words. (*After a hesitant moment SAFONOV puts his arm around her.*) Valya . . .

VALYA: Please don't. Globa taught you to do that, didn't he?

SAFONOV: What has Globa got to do with this?

VALYA: He says the same thing to everyone: "We live only once. You're a nice girl. Who knows what tomorrow may bring!" Well, I don't want it if that's the only reason.

SAFONOV: You're wrong about Globa, Valya. He admires you. (*They hear the distant sound of heavy guns.*) Our troops are much closer to the marsh. They're advancing. Just think, dear Valya, our Red Army is advancing. What a pity it would be to die now. Yesterday, the first time we heard their gunfire I began to believe that we'd see this through alive. Do your work, Valya, while I do mine here! And, if we stay above the ground, I'll have a lot to say!

VALYA: You will . . . ?

SAFONOV (*jubilantly*): "Red Army advancing!" Oh, what a song that is! And what a song it is to be alive! To be walking down the beach with some girl! (*IVANOV enters at one side.*)

IVANOV: Comrade Captain, it's time.

SAFONOV (to VALYA): Have you taken your revolver?

VALYA: It was too heavy.

SAFONOV: Here, take mine. It's lighter.

VALYA (taking it): Wonderful. (*Puts it in her pocket. A pause.*)
Well . . . ?

SAFONOV: Well . . . ? (*They look at each other earnestly and shake hands; then she turns to join IVANOV. SAFONOV stops her with a call.*)
Valya . . .

VALYA: Yes . . . ?

SAFONOV (softly, lifting a warning finger): Take a lesson from the fieldmouse: stealth and quiet.

VALYA (softly): Yes. . . . (*Her eyes sparkle as she looks at him. Then she turns and leaves, followed by IVANOV. SAFONOV looks after her, and slowly leaves the scene, after a quick glance at his wrist watch. In a moment KOZLOVSKY enters. UNKNOWN MAN enters from opposite direction. Whistles are heard.*)

KOZLOVSKY: Are you there?

UNKNOWN MAN: Here. I am here . . .

KOZLOVSKY: Damn them, they would pick just this spot for their stroll.

UNKNOWN MAN: Could you hear what they were saying?

KOZLOVSKY: No, and it doesn't matter; I know everything. Inform the Captain that some kind of explosion is being engineered over there. All the details aren't clear, but in about an hour that girl—her name is Valya—will be sent across from the south ravine.

UNKNOWN MAN: She is connected with the explosion?

KOZLOVSKY: Yes.

UNKNOWN MAN: Anything else?

KOZLOVSKY: No, tell Captain Werner I'll see him in the morning. (*The UNKNOWN MAN goes out. There is a pause. Suddenly rifle shots ring out. KOZLOVSKY runs and hides behind a tree. Then VASIN enters with the SENTRY.*)

VASIN (peering into the dark, rifle in hand): You keep a very poor lookout. Somebody swam across from this shore.

SENTRY: But, Comrade Major, it's pitch dark. Nothing can be seen. You fired yourself.

VASIN (*sternly*): Nothing could be seen because you were too late. Report to the Sergeant of the Guard: You're under arrest. (*The SOLDIER goes. VASIN peers into the dark. KOZLOVSKY tries to slip out unobserved. VASIN raises his rifle and calls.*) Halt!

KOZLOVSKY (*caught, raising his hands*): It's a friend!

VASIN (*sternly*): Who is the friend?

KOZLOVSKY (*turning, hands still above his head*): It's me, Comrade Major—Vasilenko.

VASIN: What're you doing here?

KOZLOVSKY: Can't you see it's me? Please drop your gun. (VASIN *ignores the suggestion.*) I was inspecting the sentry posts, the same as you.

VASIN: What're you doing here?

KOZLOVSKY: We Political Workers have to keep our eye on everything—

VASIN: This is not your squad, and political work has nothing to do with it. Now, for the last time, what're you doing here?

KOZLOVSKY (*with quick decision*): Alexander Vasilyevich—Uncle Alex—

VASIN: Stop these stupid jokes.

KOZLOVSKY: But I'm really your nephew.

VASIN (*gruffly*): I have no nephew named Vasilenko.

KOZLOVSKY (*with a twist*): But suppose his name is Kozlovsky . . . Kolya?

VASIN (*doubtfully*): Well . . . ?

KOZLOVSKY: Uncle Alex, I'll explain everything—why beat about the bush? I wish you only the best, do you hear me?

VASIN: I hear you, but I don't remember you.

KOZLOVSKY (*ingratiatingly*): Don't remember how you used to visit Mamma on Tserkovenaya Street in Nikolaev? Don't remember me at thirteen? How you used to bring me halvah? Honest to God, you don't?

VASIN (*after a pause*): Do you mean to say you're really my sister Olga's son?

KOZLOVSKY (*eagerly*): Of course! Kolya with the dirty face!

VASIN: And your father, how's he? Still as fat as ever?

KOZLOVSKY (*impatiently*): I'm a dangerous man, Uncle Alex—please don't waste my time! You know, Papa has been dead for fifteen years. And he was thin as winter sturgeon.

VASIN: Now, I really believe you, Kolya.

KOZLOVSKY: And now I'll tell you something else you don't remember. Today is your birthday, the 21st . . .

VASIN (*taken aback*): Yes, it's true . . .

KOZLOVSKY (*now briskly masterful*): And for a gift I give you back your life.

VASIN: You give me . . . ?

KOZLOVSKY: Since I'm talking to my uncle, a former officer of the Czar, I'll be explicit. Not later than tomorrow the Germans will launch a final attack on this position. They'll all be killed, and you with them. (*Pointedly.*) Unless I save you . . .

VASIN: And is that why you came here under an assumed name? To save me?

KOZLOVSKY: I know it sounds improbable, but that's the reason why.

VASIN: And what do you propose?

KOZLOVSKY: That we swim across to the other side, and save ourselves. I told them my uncle was not an enemy. They'll treat you like a friend.

VASIN: Yes, but how do I happen to meet you here?

KOZLOVSKY: A friend swam over from the other shore.

VASIN: A friend?

KOZLOVSKY: We exchanged some information. Well?

VASIN: I must think it over, Kolya.

KOZLOVSKY: Uncle, what's in your head! What have these Reds done for us that we should die for them? If not for them, you would be leading a peaceful, respectable life. By now you'd be a general.

VASIN: Yes, it's all true, Kolya. And you know for certain that the Germans are attacking tomorrow?

KOZLOVSKY: Of course! Why should I lie?

VASIN: That's true, there's no reason to lie. . . . (*After a pause.*) Then I'm ready, Kolya—what do I do?

KOZLOVSKY: Prove you are really a friend.

VASIN: How?

KOZLOVSKY: We must take the staff charts and documents along with us. I'll go to headquarters with you.

VASIN: It won't be easy.

KOZLOVSKY: Why? They trust you. Safonov thinks you are loyal.

VASIN: All right, I'll try.

KOZLOVSKY: Two hours to dawn—let's work fast.

VASIN (*as they start out*): By the way, your friend who swam over—you should have told him about the girl, Valya, swimming over.

KOZLOVSKY: Save your prayers and fasting; I told him everything.

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE ONE

Night.

SAFONOV's Staff Headquarters.

Seated at the table, evidently after supper, are GLOBA, PANIN, and LIEUTENANT VASILYEV. SHURA is clearing the table. GLOBA mumbles something under his breath. In the silence the LIEUTENANT takes a photograph from his pocket and looks at it fondly.

SHURA tries to take GLOBA's glass. He stops her. She goes out, reenters, and leans against rail.

GLOBA (*to himself*): Ah, vodka, scented with sweet grass . . .

PANIN: A man in Smolensk writes "Happiness is no laughing matter."

GLOBA (*clicking his tongue*): Whose photo is that?

LIEUTENANT: A girl.

GLOBA: Here, let's have a look . . . (*Looks at it silently.*) Not bad . . .

PANIN (*taking it for a silent perusal*): Yes, not bad at all.

LIEUTENANT (*taking the photograph back*): I haven't seen this girl for six months now. Do you think she's forgotten me?

GLOBA: Let me have another look. (*Looks at the photograph and returns it.*) No, she hasn't forgotten you.

LIEUTENANT (*hopefully*): What makes you think so?

GLOBA (*calmly, as an expert*): The ones with the little spit-curls in the middle of their brow are always faithful, Comrade. (*Moodily.*) No, she remembers you . . . (*Rises.*)

LIEUTENANT (*naïvely pleased, to PANIN*): And you, Comrade, have you got one?

PANIN: Me? Yes, I think so . . . somewhere among my papers.

LIEUTENANT (*politely*): Would you care to show it to us?

PANIN (*abashed*): Oh, I don't know, it's hidden somewhere . . .

LIEUTENANT: Why not show it to us?

PANIN (*taking it out*): It's all crumpled up . . . (*PANIN hands it to the LIEUTENANT.*)

LIEUTENANT (*admiringly*): Why, she's really pretty!

PANIN: My wife.

LIEUTENANT (*turning it over, then speaking hastily*): Oh, excuse me, I didn't realize there was writing.

PANIN: That's all right, it's nothing private.

LIEUTENANT (*handing picture back*): What lovely eyes! She'll be waiting too—I'm sure she will! (*GLOBA sits down. The LIEUTENANT sighs. PANIN sighs. Then GLOBA sighs. SAFONOV enters and shakes off the rain.*)

SAFONOV: It's getting colder. (*Sees them moodily yearning for home.*) Ha, yearning for home, I see. Yes, your home is far away now, Writer.

PANIN (*puts away picture*): Yes, very far . . .

SAFONOV: And how about you, Globa? I don't see any photo belonging to you.

SHURA (*pertly*): That man would have to lug around a whole album!

GLOBA: Now, now, Shura my dear, that's slander. I may be an inveterate bachelor, but a whole album is far from the truth. If it's pic-

tures to be carried, then let it be only one—one that makes my heart beat faster when I look at her. (*Slyly.*) Yours, for instance . . . (*SHURA jumps back.*)

GLOBA (*with an open-handed gesture of finality*): There, you see! But on the other hand, neither does the Captain carry a photo on him. He could always have her sitting at his side. Instead he keeps sending her away.

SAFONOV (*embarrassed*): Look, don't say that, Globa. You know there was nobody else to send.

GLOBA: And why not me?

SAFONOV: I'm holding you in reserve.

GLOBA: For what?

SAFONOV: Some emergency. Suppose . . . she is lost . . . then you'd go. (*A silence.*) We'll hang on for two days more. Everything'll be fine. (*To PANIN.*) And you, my esteemed Chief of Intelligence, will have to hand back your title and become a writer again.

PANIN: Yes, before my editors begin to think their special correspondent has gone astray! The moment I get in touch with them, I'll write an article called, "My German," all about how I killed my first German with these very hands (*holds them up*) that only knew how to use a pen before the war. (*VASIN quickly strides in, followed by KOZLOVSKY.*)

VASIN (*briskly*): Comrade Captain, has Valya been sent across yet?

SAFONOV (*rising and glancing at his watch*): She's probably reached the other shore by now. Why?

VASIN: From the South Ravine?

SAFONOV: Yes. What's wrong?

VASIN: Comrade Lieutenant, connect me with Squad Two! Urgent! (*The LIEUTENANT rises, hand on gun, backs to door. PANIN draws gun. Hearing this, KOZLOVSKY suddenly draws a gun.*)

KOZLOVSKY: Wait a minute! (*VASIN, anticipating this move, whips around and grips KOZLOVSKY's wrist with a twisting motion; the gun clatters to the floor.*)

VASIN (*sternly, picking up gun*): You should learn how to handle them before attempting guns!

SAFONOV: What is this about?

VASIN: Panin, kindly get one of your men to take him away.

PANIN: Orderly! (*A GUARD enters.*)

VASIN: Keep him here. Under special guard.

PANIN: Get in . . . (*KOZLOVSKY does not move.*) Well?

(*KOZLOVSKY, PANIN, and the GUARD go into the room.*)

SAFONOV: What happened, old man?

VASIN: I'll tell you in a minute. (*To the LIEUTENANT.*) Did you get through to them?

LIEUTENANT: Yes, they're on the wire.

VASIN (*speaking into the telephone*): Has the girl, Valya, been sent across to the other shore yet? . . . What? (*Testily.*) Never mind. I know what can be said over the phone and what can't! Has she crossed over? . . . I see. (*He hangs up.*) She's been sent over.

SAFONOV: Vasin, what is this all about?

VASIN (*rising and nodding at the other room*): Come on, we'll get my nephew to explain. He has some information about a German attack.

SAFONOV: German attack! (*VASIN goes into the next room, SAFONOV follows him quickly. Exit the LIEUTENANT.*)

SHURA (*after a frightened moment*): Globa! . . .

GLOBA: Well?

SHURA: Do you think . . . Valyechka? You think she's lost?

GLOBA (*gloomily*): Be quiet.

SHURA (*with a trace of whimpering*): Valyechka . . . she's . . . do you think?

GLOBA (*with asperity*): Don't talk too much!

SHURA: But don't you feel sorry for her, Globa? Don't you?

GLOBA (*striking the table with his fist*): I said, Don't talk so much. Stop it, I said!

SAFONOV (*appearing in the doorway*): Globa!

GLOBA (*jumping to his feet*): Yes?

SAFONOV: Get into your civilian clothes!

GLOBA: They're at the hospital.

SAFONOV: Hurry up! (*Exit, right, closing the door again.*)

GLOBA: Well, here's the emergency, my little turnip! Look around—find an eau-de-cologne bottle or something. Fill it with vodka, so I can warm myself when I swim across. (*He hurries out, leaving a pensive SHURA behind. She goes to her typewriter table and rummages in the drawers, finding a bottle at which she stares pensively.*)

SHURA: Valyechka's cologne . . . (*Cries.*)

(SAFONOV and VASIN rush in with KOZLOVSKY between them, the GUARD following. The belt and insignia have been torn from KOZLOVSKY's coat. The sound of an airplane is heard.)

SAFONOV: Globa go?

SHURA: Yes.

SAFONOV: Good. (*To VASIN.*) Well, it's time we ended this. Everything seems clear.

VASIN: He's changed since I saw him last. I'm ready to bear full responsibility for my negligence.

SAFONOV: Don't upset yourself. He won't be your nephew once he's shot. (*PANIN comes from other room with a paper in his hand.*)

PANIN: The affidavit is all drawn up, Comrade Captain.

SAFONOV (*to PANIN*): Take him out.

PANIN: Come on.

GUARD: Come on. (*KOZLOVSKY is taken out by PANIN and GUARD.*)

VASIN (*after a pause*): Today is my birthday—a fine birthday gift. I'm asking that the whole matter be reported.

SAFONOV: Oh, stop it, old man, with your responsibilities. There's no time for drawing up reports. We've got some fighting to do if your nephew's news is true. (*He sits and his head droops. VASIN observes him in silence.*)

VASIN (*finally*): What's wrong, my friend? (*Gets no answer.*) What is it, Ivan Nikitich . . . ?

SAFONOV (*his voice muffled*): She won't say a word about the bridge. We can attend to that all right. We'll send Globa. Now, she won't speak. I know her. But if they . . . she still won't say a word . . . and you know what that means with them . . .

VASIN: Yes.

ORDERLY (*opening the door*): Someone from the army to see you, Comrade Captain.

SAFONOV (*looking up*): From the army? Who is it?

(GAVRILOV enters.)

GAVRILOV: Captain Gavrilov, of the 43rd Staff Headquarters.

SAFONOV (*rising to meet him and shaking hands*): How do you do—I'm Safonov, Captain Safonov. Got here by plane?

GAVRILOV: Yes, and I'm chilled to the bone, to tell the truth.

SAFONOV: Shura! Come on, step lively. And see about some tea, too. (SHURA *whispers in his ear*.) Try to get it out of tomorrow's rations. She says there's no more water. (*Exit SHURA*.) Have a seat and let's get acquainted. Who was it sent you?

GAVRILOV: Major-General Lukonin.

SAFONOV: Well, and how's things over there?

GAVRILOV: Our troops are getting closer.

SAFONOV: You don't say! Then they'll be here in another day or so?

GAVRILOV: It looks that way. Here's the order I was to hand you for execution.

SAFONOV: An order. Excuse me, but it's been a long time since I received an order. My head's dizzy making them up myself. (*Breaks the seal on the dispatch*.) In the meantime we prepared a little surprise here. (*Lowers his voice*.) We're blowing the bridge sky-high today—everything the Germans have on that side will be stranded there.

GAVRILOV: Did you say the bridge?

SAFONOV (*reading the dispatch*): So that's how matters stand. Then we'll have to leave the bridge? (*To VASIN*.) Old man, the bridge'll have to be left standing.

VASIN: Left standing?

SAFONOV (*handing the dispatch to VASIN*): That's the program! (*Calls the LIEUTENANT*.) Vasilyev!

LIEUTENANT: Yes, Comrade Captain? (*Shot*.)

SAFONOV: Telephone any officer you can reach. Say I must see them right away. (*To GAVRILOV*.) It won't take long—it's only a small sector we have left here. (*To VASIN*.) Read it?

VASIN: Yes.

SAFONOV (*at center, softly*): So, our army is pushing the Germans up to the water front. Our orders are to muster all our forces, withdraw from here, seize the bridge and hold it till our troops arrive. Clear?

VASIN: That's clear.

SAFONOV: Well, greybeard, it looks as if you and I'd better give up our idea of staying alive, huh?

VASIN: That's how it looks.

GAVRILOV: Here's a personal note from the general.

SAFONOV: I must see that! (*Takes the note and reads it.*) How do you like that! "Dear ex-driver and present-day Captain, please remember old times . . ." It's a pleasure to get a letter from a general—twice as pleasant when it comes from an old friend. Yah, they won't reproach us. If we stay alive, they won't reproach us. And if we die . . . they certainly won't reproach us. It's not easy, Comrade, but we'll do it. We'll take that bridge. (PANIN *enters.*) The bridge will be my job. I'll attend to that. You, Vasin, here's a real birthday gift. Take what's left of Squad Two and pretend to break through at the North Ravine.

VASIN: You mean a sort of demonstration?

SAFONOV: Yes, but forget that word. I want your men to tackle that job with real conviction. Of course you realize the position is hopeless. Panin goes with you as your Commissar. (GLOBA *enters, dressed in civilian clothes.*)

VASIN: But the Germans may not rise to the bait.

SAFONOV: They will, don't worry—it's planned that way. Globa's the one to help them take the bait. Globa, this is your job. Cross over and get in touch with Vasili at my mother's house. Tell him the bridge is not to be blown up. Clear?

GLOBA: Crystal.

SAFONOV: Can you manage?

GLOBA: And then return.

SAFONOV: No. After that you'll head for the German Kommandant's office.

GLOBA: Yes . . . ?

SAFONOV: When you meet the German chief tell him the old story: you're a former rich peasant, been hounded and persecuted. And you have this information to give: in view of the close approach of our main units, tomorrow night at eight we are breaking through at the North Ravine.

GLOBA: Everything clear.

SAFONOV: They'll put you through a third degree, of course. But stick to your story. They'll lock you in a cell, but stick to what you've said. Then they'll believe you, but hold you as a hostage. And then they'll shoot you if things don't turn out the way you said.

GLOBA (*after a pause*): Will they turn out the way I said?

SAFONOV: No, my dear, they won't . . .

GLOBA: Everything clear.

SAFONOV: You see, Globa, here's the order I've just received. We have no other choice. Great things hang in the balance. The fate of many people depends on you.

GLOBA: I see . . . (*After a pause.*) And if I'm dying may I sing a song?

SAFONOV: Of course you may, my dear.

GLOBA: Then it's fine if I can sing. (*Softly.*) And suppose I find myself in the same cell with the girl . . . is there any message?

SAFONOV: Any message . . . ? Yes, look straight in her eyes. If it's worth the saying, tell her this: "Safonov asked me to tell you he loves you very much."

GLOBA: Good enough.

SAFONOV: Well, then . . . (*Starts to shake hands.*)

GLOBA: We mustn't forget an old custom of ours: to sit down a moment, for good luck, before setting out on the road. (*Silently they all sit down.*) Shura!

SHURA: Yes? (*GAVRILOV watches.*)

GLOBA: Let me have half a glass before I go. (*Lifts the glass of vodka which SHURA has filled.*) Vodka scented with summer grass . . . (*Drains it and looks at GAVRILOV.*) What are you looking at Comrade Captain? It's not for courage—it's to keep me warm. This never helps for courage—a song helps for courage. (*Gives SHURA glass. Then*

he shakes everyone by the hand. As he reaches the door he breaks into an old Russian song: "Nightingale, Nightingale, wee little bird." Singing, he disappears through the doorway: silence in the room.)

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE TWO

The home of the KHARITONOVs, as in Act Two. The dining-room has been converted into a sentry guard's room. Everything is laid waste: furniture is smashed, curtains torn down, while forgotten portraits still hang on the walls. The windows have been nailed up from outside with crossed boards. One of the interior doors has been faced with iron sheeting and is locked with a heavy sliding bolt. The steel helmet and bayonet tip of a sentry can be seen from time to time through the fanlight of the street door.

WERNER *is seated at the table, his head wound around with a scarf. KRAUSE, the staff clerk, is facing him.*

WERNER (*disgusted*): You're a big fool, Krause! When you detained the girl you should have questioned her first. (*Nods at the iron-faced door.*) Then you could have placed her in the common cell.

KRAUSE: Allow me to say, Herr Kapitän . . . she was placed in the cell with the others because you were not here.

WERNER: She should not have been placed in the common cell whether I was here or not! Now she says only what they prearranged between themselves. And all this because you're such a stupid block-head!

KRAUSE (*stiffening to further attention*): To be sure, Herr Kapitän!

WERNER: Bring her in. (*A SOLDIER leads in VALYA. She looks utterly worn out, her hands listlessly hanging at her sides.*)

WERNER: I hear that you were beaten up . . .

VALYA: Yes.

WERNER: Tomorrow you'll be beaten up again . . . unless you tell us the truth. In that case you will no longer be mistreated—you will be shot. I give you the word of a soldier—not hanged—shot. (VALYA remains silent.) Why did you cross to this shore?

VALYA: As I've already told you . . . (*With deathly weariness, repeating by rote.*) To reassure the mother of one of our officers. I told her we'd all soon be relieved. She's imprisoned here—she'll tell you this is the truth.

WERNER: Of course, after you both talked it over, thanks to this stupid clerk! And why did you carry a Browning on you. A filial gift from son to mother?

VALYA: I had the gun to shoot myself if necessary . . .

WERNER (*warningly*): We do not allow women to shoot themselves.

VALYA (*wearily*): But I told you why I came across. To—

WERNER (*hitting the table with a fist*): I have already heard that! Krause!

KRAUSE: Ja?

WERNER: Bring in the old one. (KRAUSE brings in MARTHA PETROVNA. Her grey hair is disarrayed and, like VALYA's, her entire body sags.)

WERNER (*to MARTHA*): What did she come to you for? What was her intention? (*No answer.*) How many times has she visited you? (*No answer.*) It is now exactly three minutes to seven. If you don't speak up by seven o'clock I shall have you hanged. That's all. (*He throws himself back in his chair in a waitful pose. There is a pause.*)

MARTHA (*finally*): I'll answer you, Officer. If there's only three minutes left, I'll answer you.

WERNER (*hiding his satisfaction*): Well . . . ?

MARTHA: Officer, I hear you're from Leipzig.

WERNER: Well?

MARTHA: I'd like to fly by magic to your Leipzig. I'd take your mothers by the hair and fly them back with me. And from up above I'd show them what their sons have done. And I'd say, "See, you bitches! Look at the litters you have whelped. Look at the rats and beetles you bore! The unspeakable beasts you gave to the world!" Yes, and if they failed to curse you, I would kill them and you together!

WERNER (*rising*): Silence!!

MARTHA: Your three minutes are up. Where's your rope?

WERNER (*glancing at the watch*): Ten seconds left. I am waiting.

MARTHA (*with a proud smile*): He's waiting . . .

WERNER (*looking at his watch*): Well? . . . Take her out and hang her. (KRAUSE leads her to the door. There she turns and silently makes a deep bow to VALYA. KRAUSE hands her over to soldiers beyond the door and returns. There is a pause; WERNER looks at his watch again. To VALYA.) In sixty seconds she'll be hanged. (*Insistently.*) And you carried the gun in case of rape.

VALYA: Yes.

WERNER: Personally, I don't approve of rape. But Krause here is very fond of it. Krause.

KRAUSE: Jawohl, Herr Kapitän.

WERNER (*to VALYA*): He will be relieved by ten o'clock.

SOLDIER (*entering*): A deserter to see you, Herr Kapitän.

WERNER: A deserter? Let him in. (GLOBA enters.) Come here. Where are you from?

GLOBA: From the other side, Herr Kapitän. I deserted.

WERNER: Who are you?

GLOBA: Assistant Military Surgeon. Globa's my name.

WERNER: Sit down.

GLOBA: Much obliged, Herr Kapitän.

WERNER: Why did you desert?

GLOBA: There's an international adage: charity begins at home. Why should all the Russians die because of these Reds?

WERNER: Did you ever see (*points to VALYA*) that girl over there?

GLOBA (*carelessly*): I've seen her around.

WERNER: What is she over there?

GLOBA: The Captain's whore, I guess . . .

WERNER (*smiling with satisfaction*): Well, what is it you wanted to tell me? You must have something to tell.

GLOBA: By all means, Herr Kapitän. They threw me in jail for five years. They took away everything I had. But now they expect me to die for them. I have some very important information for you . . .

(*He indicates VALYA in the room. She looks at him with bitter hate.*)

WERNER: That's all right—she'll forfeit her life tonight. Speak out.

GLOBA: May I have a cigarette, Herr Kapitän? (*Lights up.*) Much obliged. (*Inhales gratefully, then, leans over, confidentially.*) Listen, Herr Offizier, they'd pay a mint of money over there for a jug of water and some cartridges. They've decided to attempt a break-through tonight along the river shore, at the North Ravine. They don't think you'll expect it . . .

WERNER: Is this true?

GLOBA: That's why I decided to come over tonight. Maybe you'd have me shot if I came empty-handed. But this information should prove my loyalty.

WERNER: For when is this timed?

GLOBA: Very soon—eight o'clock.

WERNER (*after a thoughtful moment, drawing a map from his field-wallet*): Look here. Where is it? Here?

GLOBA (*looking at the map*): Yes, right here, this spot.

WERNER: And how can you prove you're telling the truth?

GLOBA: It begins in half an hour—you'll see for yourself.

WERNER (*hearing distant gunfire*): You hear that . . .? Do you know the Russians have come right up to the swamp?

GLOBA (*listening*): Yes, I hear it, Herr Offizier—right beyond the house I had at Vinnitsa with my murdered wife. Have no doubts, Kapitän—everything I said is true. After all, I'm in your hands. If I'm wrong . . . I'm finished!

WERNER: Yes, you should realize that, believe me! Krause, take them away. (*KRAUSE takes VALYA and GLOBA through the iron-faced door and returns, putting the telephone call through.*)

WERNER (*speaking into telephone*): Staff Headquarters!—Herr Major, a deserter has just drifted through from the other side. He says they have no water or cartridges, and that they are cut off from their army; at 8:00 they will try a break-through at the North Ravine—so I suggest we transfer Company 4 from the bridge. They'll never think of attacking at the bridge. Of course I will check it up. (*Replaces the receiver and stands.*) Krause!

KRAUSE: Jawohl, Herr Kapitän.

WERNER: Is our agent still in the cell there, too?

KRAUSE: Jawohl, Herr Kapitän.

WERNER: Give them all some bread to eat—feed it to them out here. Let our agent watch and listen—he'll know what to do. You stay outside and keep an eye on them through the door.

KRAUSE: Very good, Herr Kapitän. (WERNER exits. KRAUSE *unbolts the iron door.*) Hey, come out of the cell, you. (SEMYONOV, GLOBA and VALYA *come into the room.* KRAUSE *picks up a plate of bread chunks.*) Here's your meal. (To VALYA.) You. (Throws the bread at the motionless girl.) You. (GLOBA *takes the bread.* KRAUSE *crosses to SEMYONOV and pointedly puts the bread in his hand.* KRAUSE exits. SEMYONOV *eats with his back to the others.* GLOBA *watches him approvingly.*)

VALYA (*softly*): What you told the Germans, that wasn't true, was it, Globa? There are no outsiders here—you can talk.

GLOBA (*loudly*): Why the cackle? Don't you think I crawled enough over there? Now I'm being paid back for my broken home, for my prison term—for everything I've endured for years!

VALYA (*shocked*): You miserable dog! I would've killed you if I'd known this before! And so would Safonov!

GLOBA: My, my, ifs and buts—they fly and swim!

VALYA (*to SEMYONOV*): You heard him, Comrade. He's betrayed the other shore. He's told these Germans everything—hundreds will die because of him. Oh, if only I had something in my hands! That's what I think! you—! (She strikes him in the face. He roughly pushes her away; she totters and sits in a chair near the wall. There is a long silence. Seeing that SEMYONOV has turned his back to them, GLOBA goes to VALYA and gently touches her. She turns and speaks in a loud, embittered voice.)

VALYA: What do you want? (SEMYONOV *quickly turns.* GLOBA *changes his tactics.*)

GLOBA (*roughly*): What do I want? Look here, girl, keep your hands to yourself! I don't like to be touched. The next time I'm liable to hurt you!

VALYA: Why didn't I guess all this before. You always said ugly things. Now I see what it meant.

SEMYONOV (*going to her*): There, don't get all upset. (*Of GLOBA.*) Can't you see he's one of us, a comrade? He's being careful. (*Angrily, to GLOBA.*) Stop acting like a fool! What are we, Germans, or what? The three of us will soon be dead—why act suspicious. You're making this girl sick. Tell her you crossed over with a special assignment. We know about those things.

GLOBA: Go to Hell; you know about those things! I'm anxious to live—that's my sole assignment! You and your Soviets!

VALYA (*to SEMYONOV*): Hit the pig for me! Hit him! Hit him! (*SEMYONOV goes at GLOBA with an upraised arm. GLOBA grabs and twists his arms.*)

GLOBA: Get back! Drop your hands! Otherwise I'll call the Germans. You know the information I brought them. They'll break your bones if you start with me! (*He pushes SEMYONOV back: there is a wary pause. GLOBA looks intently at an old grandfather clock left in the corner. The hands point to eight o'clock.*) Is this clock right? (*Gets no answer.*) Is this clock right?

SEMYONOV (*jeeringly*): What do you need the time for? Going somewhere? (*With a spy's interest.*) Why are you so interested in the time?

GLOBA: Tell me, my little rat (*listens intently*), Why are you so interested in me? . . . (*And then the first distant sounds of gunfire are heard in the silence.*) Hurrah! (*The lights fade out.*)

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE THREE

The bank of a river, the scene before; to one side an improvised rampart of sandbags. The music of battle all around; from time to time a flare lights up the gloomy scene.

VASIN is examining the opposite shore through binoculars. His left hand is bandaged. Near by on a knoll a CORPORAL is working a field telephone.

VASIN: They're so insolent, they're careless, those Hitlerites! (*Several German bullets sizzle through the scene.*)

CORPORAL (*warningly*): Keep low, Comrade Major! . . .

VASIN (*turning to him calmly, with a deep-throated laugh*): You're a saucy village boy!

CORPORAL (*not at all abashed*): How is your hand, now?

VASIN: Unimportant. Number seven, but unimportant.

CORPORAL (*extending the phone*): Headquarters is ready now . . .

VASIN (*speaking into the phone*): Major Vasin speaking . . . Tell the Captain the Germans are engaged. Quite a number—just what we wanted. Oh, yes, we'll hold—don't worry about that! (*He hangs up and rises as a SERGEANT runs in.*)

SERGEANT: What are your orders, Comrade Major?

VASIN (*briskly*): Prepare for advance! Platoon Three will soon be coming up—lead it right into action, Sergeant.

SERGEANT: All good, Major! (*Salutes. He moves away, is shot, and falls. VASIN hurriedly examines dead SERGEANT, and then turns to CORPORAL.*)

VASIN: Corporal, a sniper has found our address! Take command of Squad Two! Hold at the orchard positions angle till further orders.

CORPORAL (*smartly*): Very good, Comrade Major! (*Salutes. Exit. At the same time a SOLDIER hurries in from the other side.*)

SOLDIER: The respects of Squad Three, Comrade Major. Bullets, we need more bullets!

VASIN: There are no more bullets. Use your hand grenades, as needed.

SOLDIER: There are no more grenades.

VASIN: Then use your bayonets and rifle butts when the line moves up.

SOLDIER: Very good, Comrade Major. (*The SOLDIER salutes and turns to go, this time seeing the dead body.*) Who's this?

VASIN (*soberly*): Some Russian mother's son . . . (*The SOLDIER grips his pistol tighter and hurries out. VASIN peers down at the dead SERGEANT.*) A boy. (*With another distant burst of rifle fire, a bullet wings in and strikes VASIN in the chest. He staggers back a step, gasps, coughs, and sucks in his breath. Holds hand on chest.*) Eight . . . ! (*Then, he carefully lowers himself to sitting position on the knoll, picks up the telephone.*) Hello . . . ? Major Vasin again . . . send me a commanding officer. I'm waiting for orders to advance, but send an officer immediately . . . (*Hanging up the phone, he feels his wound; it is very bad.*) Important . . . (*He begins to cough, but turns to face PANIN who hurries in, and hides his serious condition.*) Who is that?

PANIN: Panin.

VASIN: Welcome, Panin . . . don't I hear firing from the bridge?

PANIN: Yes, Comrade Major, it's heavy gunfire, from the bridge.

VASIN: Heavy? (*Shakes his head.*) I seem to hear it poorly. I must be growing older. So Safonov has reached the bridge! Good! (*He stands with an effort, trying to hide his weakened condition, but totters a little.*)

PANIN (*alarmed*): What is it, Major?

VASIN: Why?

PANIN: Are you hurt?

VASIN (*shaking off the other*): I told you I'm growing older . . . (*With assumed jocularly.*) Panin . . . how old are you?

PANIN: Thirty-three . . .

VASIN (*with a surge of giddiness*): And I . . . I am sixty-two today. Greet me, my friend, greet me . . . (*Extends hand.*)

PANIN (*taking his hand, anxiously*): Are you seriously wounded, Comrade Major?

VASIN (*exultantly*): Yes, my eighth, and last, I think! And that is why I have to say . . . Glory Be . . . Oh, Glory Be to Russian Arms! . . . (*The old man abruptly crumples to the ground. PANIN touches him and then removes his hat; in another moment he is speaking into the field telephone in a chilled businesslike voice.*)

PANIN: Chief of Intelligence speaking. Major Vasin died at his

post, having done all that he could. And tell the Captain that Panin has taken over the command of the Platoon! Panin, the writer. (PANIN hangs up the phone with a click, and stiffens proudly. To one side a treble flurry of gunshots sounds, above the bass of the distant heavier guns.)

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE FOUR

The same as Scene Two. The clock points to ten. GLOBA is pacing to and fro. VALYA is wearily reclining on a chair. SEMYONOV carefully watches them from a corner. Near-by gunfire is heard.

GLOBA (*listening attentively*): Ten . . . well, it's ten o'clock. Excellent. A very pretty hour!

SEMYONOV (*sullenly*): Pretty for what?

GLOBA: It all depends on what you're looking for. Our Nazi hosts seem to have forgotten all about us. Do you think they're too busy somewhere else?

SEMYONOV (*gloomily*): I don't know.

GLOBA (*feeling very chipper*): You don't know? And I was sure you'd be the very man to know! (*Shots and the rat-tat of a machine gun are heard very near now.*)

SEMYONOV (*frightened*): That's right in the streets! . . . Street fighting?

GLOBA: But what are you afraid of? Aren't they your friends? Haven't they entered the town? I'm the one who should be afraid, not you.

VALYA (*stirring with hope*): Are they really here? (*To SEMYONOV.*) Are these our troops?

SEMYONOV: How should I know who they are! (*Listens closely.*)

GLOBA (*going to him*): I can't understand why you don't seem pleased.

SEMYONOV (*all ears*): Will you stop it!

GLOBA: Come on, you mother's son—turn around. (SEMYONOV *turns*.) I want to impress on my mind what you looked like before. Because this is what you'll look like now! (*Raps him on one ear*.) And another one to balance it up! (*After a blow on the other ear, a third blow on the jaw sends SEMYONOV to the floor*.) And now stay there. Get used to the ground—you'll lie there a long time once you're shot!

VALYA: What are you doing?! (*Shots*.)

GLOBA: Can't you see, Valyechka dearest? Our troops have broken into the town—And it means the Germans aren't worth two marks a bundle. And it means that we'll soon be shot by our jailers. They'll be back—it's a habit of theirs not to neglect unfinished business. But before we die, I— You understand. (*With a warm smile*.) There my dear, that's what I'm doing!

VALYA (*suddenly embracing him*): Globa, dear, dear, Globa!

GLOBA: Here, did I earn this? (*She is wordlessly pressing him tighter*.) Now what's the crying about? I didn't see tears when you almost banged my eye out. Now she's weeping—a wench with a temper and a tear . . .

VALYA: But I was in such torment, and so tired!

GLOBA (*rocking her in his arms*): Shhh . . . But don't forget, they'll soon be back. So brace your bones, Valyechka. (SEMYONOV *tries to crawl to the door*. GLOBA *stops him*.) The Germans told you to sit with us? Then sit with us! (*To VALYA*.) Here, let me look into your eyes.

VALYA: Why?

GLOBA: Orders, my dear, orders. Safonov told me to look into your eyes and tell you a little word.

VALYA: A word?

GLOBA: "Tell her," he said, "I love her very much." That's all. . . .

VALYA: Is that true?

GLOBA: In the face of death who would tell a lie? (*Shots are heard*)

just outside. The door is rudely flung open and KRAUSE rushes in, pistol drawn, followed by a soldier carrying a tommy-gun.)

KRAUSE: Into the cell, you Russians.

GLOBA (*to VALYA*): Come, my dear . . . (*He gently puts his arm around her and walks her into the cell, singing.*)

KRAUSE (*to SEMYONOV*): Hurry up! Get in!!

SEMYONOV (*rushing to him*): Herr Krause! But I'm with the Germans! I was placed here. You know it, you—

KRAUSE (*kicking him*): Get in! Hurry up!

SEMYONOV: Wait a minute! It's very important!

KRAUSE: What is it? Hurry up!

SEMYONOV: That man's a Red. He was telling lies. He—

KRAUSE (*impatiently*): What's the difference now! Get in there!

SEMYONOV (*hysterically*): Herr Krause, call the Captain! (*Catches his arm.*) He knows. The Captain—I'll call him myself! (*He rushes to the outer door. Just as he crosses the threshold KRAUSE shoots him in the back. The thud of a falling body is heard.*)

KRAUSE (*to the SOLDIER*): Well? (*Going to the cell door, the SOLDIER fires a round of bullets into the cell. GLOBA's voice is heard singing, "Nightingale, Nightingale, wee little bird . . . Sing me your song so sweet. Sing, sing and sing yet again, Nightingale, wee little . . ."* GLOBA's song stops. *The crackle of rifle fire is heard outside the window. KRAUSE and the SOLDIER hurry out. Meanwhile, another soldier has entered and cut the wires of the field telephone on the table. SOLDIER exits. Two RED SOLDIERS enter, carrying rifles. They run out after the Germans. A third RED SOLDIER enters and starts repairing the field telephone as VALYA crawls in from the cell.*)

VALYA: Globa. (*She tries to drag herself to the armchair but collapses before she can get to it. Speaks to the SOLDIER.*) Listen, you, have we captured the town?

SOLDIER: Yes, we've captured the town. (*GAVRILOV and a RED ARMY MAN burst into the room.*)

GAVRILOV (*hurrying to VALYA*): What's this? Did they just do this?

VALYA: Yes. (*GAVRILOV takes off his coat and covers her with it,*

after helping her into the chair.) Help me dress my wound. Have a look in there first . . . (*GAVRILOV exits into cell.*) He stood in front of me. (*GAVRILOV comes out of cell.*) Alive? (*GAVRILOV shakes his head.*)

GAVRILOV (*taking a first-aid dressing out of his kit and putting it on her wound*): Here. Hold that there.

(SAFONOV, LIEUTENANT VASILYEV and RED ARMY MEN *enter.*)

SAFONOV: This was their Kommandant's office. The prisoners should be around here somewhere. (*Sees VALYA.*) Valya! (*He takes her in his arms. VALYA faints.*) Quick, get someone—doctor or Shura. Hurry! What's happened, Valya, speak!

GAVRILOV: She's probably fainted. Just spoke to her.

SAFONOV: It's not serious, is it?

GAVRILOV: She'll be all right. (*Nods at cell door.*) But not your Comrade Globa . . . in there. (*SAFONOV goes into the cell, then comes out slowly, his head bowed.*)

SAFONOV: One after the other. The old man. Globa . . . (*SHURA rushes in, whimpering. Kneels next to VALYA.*) Stop your noise. Hurry up and dress her wound till the doctor gets here. (*An ADJUTANT enters.*)

ADJUTANT (*announcing*): Major-General Lukonin. Attention! (*MAJOR-GENERAL LUKONIN enters.*)

SAFONOV (*turning*): Comrade Major-General Lukonin!

LUKONIN: Don't—no reports are necessary. I know it all. Greetings, Ivan. (*Embraces him.*) We meet right here from three directions—that means good luck. Since you helped take the town, you'll have to be Garrison Commander for a while. But not for long—we'll soon be moving up ahead.

SAFONOV: Is that definite?

LUKONIN: Oh, absolutely. You know me, Ivan—once I've said a thing, I do it. And if I happen to say something a little extra, then I just do something a little extra. (*Crosses to table.*) At ease, comrades! (*To his ADJUTANT.*) Here, let's have a look at the map. Come on, Ivan, take a seat—why stand?

SAFONOV: I've lost a lot of people. Good ones . . .

LUKONIN: I know . . . a great many have been killed. But when one tree dies we must plant two others in its place. Lieutenant, did you get the names of those the Germans hanged here?

LIEUTENANT: Yes, the list is here.

LUKONIN: We shall hold the funeral tomorrow—we'll say a few last words—our last farewell to the comrades who were murdered. Will you read off the names? (*The LIEUTENANT unfolds the list.*)

LIEUTENANT: Ivan Antonov. Anna Petrovna. Peter Sintsov. Unknown person. Vasili Nikolosky. That's a little boy. Anton Polyarov. Alexei Ganykin. Martha—Martha Petrovna Safonova.

VALYA: Ivan! (*SAFONOV moves to LIEUTENANT and takes the list from his hands.*)

LUKONIN: What's the matter, Safonov?

SAFONOV: Nothing, Comrade Major-General, not a thing. . . . But I want very much to live. And to live on for a long time. To live on till my own eyes shall see the very last one of those who did all this lying dead! The very last one, and dead! Right here, under our feet!

CURTAIN

THE FRONT

A Play in Three Acts and Five Scenes

By ALEXANDER KORNEICHUK

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN

By Bernard L. Kotem and Zina Voynow



KORNEICHUK

Alexander Evdokimovich Korneichuk was born in 1905 in the Ukraine, and at the end of the First World War saw his native Ukraine overrun by Germans and other interventionists. At an early age he became a Com-somol and began writing.

His first important play, The Sinking of the Squadron (1934), was performed at the Theatre of the Revolution and later at the Red Army Theatre. It dealt with the heroic sailors of the Red Navy at the time of the Russian Revolution who scuttled their fleet and perished with it rather than have it fall into the hands of the interventionists. Platon Krechet (1935), produced in the Moscow Art Theatre, depicted a surgeon performing a difficult operation at a time when he was suffering under a most unjust suspicion. The Banker (1936) showed a new type of Soviet banker, running a bank not for profit but for the good of the people as a whole. In The Truth (1937) Korneichuk turned back to the Russian Revolution and presented a Ukrainian peasant journeying to Petrograd to see Lenin and learn "the truth" from him. Bogdan Khmel'nitski (1938) went back in history to the seventeenth century and a struggle of the Ukrainian peasants against their Polish overlords.

For these plays he was awarded the Stalin Prize early in 1941. He went on to write In the Ukrainian Steppes (1941) about the peasants of his own day. The characters in this play became favorites with Russian audiences and when the German invasion began later in that year he brought them into a sequel, Partisans in the Ukrainian Steppes (1942), representing them as overrun by the invasion.

Finally in The Front (1942), printed here, he ventured to criticize some of the older generals in a play that was widely discussed and was printed in full in Pravda. So much respect did the people have for his judgment that he was made People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs for Ukraine and later Chairman of the Committee on Art Affairs there. In 1944 he was married to Wanda Wasilewska, the Polish author of The Rainbow. He also produced in 1944 a satire on American visitors to Russia called Mr. Perkins' Mission to the Land of the Bolsheviks.

H. W. L. D.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

GORLOV, Commander of the Front
GAIDAR, Member of the Military Council
BLAGONRAVOV, Chief of Staff of the Front
OGNEV, Army Commander
KOLOS, Cavalry Unit Commander
ORLIK, Chief of Army Political Division
UDIVITELNYI, Chief of Reconnaissance of the Front
MIRON GORLOV, Commander's Brother, Director of an Aviation Plant
SERGEI GORLOV, Commander's Son, Guards Lieutenant
SVECHKA, Guards Colonel
KRIKUN, Special Correspondent
TIKHII, Editor of Front-line Newspaper
IASNYI, Guards Major
OSTAPENKO, Guards Sergeant
BASHLYKOV, Guards Sergeant
GOMELAURI, Guards Junior Sergeant
SHAIAMETOV, Guards Junior Sergeant
MARUSIA, Nurse
KHRIPUN, Chief of Front-line Communications
MESTNYI, Chairman of City Executive Committee
PECHENKA, Red Army man
GRUSTNYI, Actor
Commanders, officers, staff, Red Army men, guests

(*Note: Many names in the cast have literal meaning, characterizing the individuals: Udivitelnyi—amazed, always taken by surprise; Krikun—loud-mouthed; Tikhii—meek, quiet; Khripun—a hoarse person; Grustnyi—a sad person.*)

Time of Action, 1942. Place of Action: Act I, Scene 1—Office of the Commander of the Front. Scene 2—Commander's Quarters. Act II, Scene 1—Ognev's Headquarters. Scene 2—A dugout by the road. Act III, Scene 1—Office of the Commander of the Front.

THE FRONT

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

The Office of the Commander of the Front. Map on wall. Standing in front of it is the Commander, GORLOV. ADJUTANT enters.

ADJUTANT: Comrade Commander, the editor of our front-line newspaper, Senior Battalion Commissar Tikhii, and the special military correspondent, Battalion Commissar Krikun, request five minutes of your time.

GORLOV: Show them in. (*Pulls string. Map slides up. Sits down at table and writes. Enter the correspondent, KRIKUN, and the editor, TIKHII. A huge Mauser hangs from KRIKUN's belt. A Leica is swung across his chest.*) Be seated—I'll be with you in a minute. (*Finishes what he is doing.*) Well, pen-pushers, what have you got to say for yourselves? (*He laughs. TIKHII and KRIKUN stand up.*)

KRIKUN: The editorial board of the Moscow newspaper I have the honor to represent have ordered me to bring you, Comrade Commander of the Front—to you, feariless warrior—their ardent congratulations. Today I learned by phone of the decree awarding you an Order, published on our paper's front page. I was assigned to do an article on you, and it is with great joy that I have written three hundred words. So as to avoid any errors I'd like to check with you what year you received your first Order.

GORLOV: In 1920.

KRIKUN (*noting this*): I see. And your second?

GORLOV: My second? In 1921.

KRIKUN: Wonderful. And the third?

GORLOV: On the twentieth anniversary of the Red Army.

KRIKUN: Splendid. (*Writes.*) And your fourth?

GORLOV: And my fourth? It looks as if I'm getting it today.

KRIKUN: Oh, yes! I beg your pardon. I beg your pardon. Allow me to take a picture of you for the Moscow press.

GORLOV (*smiling*): That isn't necessary, is it?

KRIKUN: Oh—yes. The country must know its outstanding military leaders. Just one minute. (*Focuses his Leica.*) Here we go. Don't move, please. There you are. Just once more. Profile. There you are. Thank you. You'll pardon me, Comrade Commander, but the Communications Center has refused to transmit my material today. All I have are two articles: one about Red Army heroes and one about you. I beg you to help me.

GORLOV: Who is treating you badly?

KRIKUN: The Commissar. He says the articles are too long and I must cut them. But do you think it's possible to cut such material?

GORLOV: About me, it's quite possible; but not about the Red Army men.

KRIKUN: I can't cut it. The whole article would fall to pieces. It's a question of construction; it's the style of its composition . . .

GORLOV: All right, all right. You pen-pushers are a great lot. You're masters at subterfuge. Composition, style, and—what do you call it?—genre. Pretty vague stuff. We soldiers are plain people. You must talk simply to us. Just say, "Help me, Comrade Commander"—and we will help in every way we can. (*He presses button. Enter ADJUTANT.*) Get Khripun for me on the telephone.

ADJUTANT: Major-General Khripun is here. He just arrived.

GORLOV: Have him come in.

ADJUTANT: Yes, Comrade Commissar. (*Exit.*)

GORLOV: I like you fellows, respect you. But you write too little and don't cover enough. You should get to the front lines. That's where the real stuff is.

KRIKUN: I'd even be happy to live at the front. But I'm a special correspondent for this sector and to my regret I must be close to Headquarters so as to be able to cover everything. But don't worry; I get all important material here and work it up. A hundred and

five of my articles on heroes have already been published. Facts are what I need. I create everything else.

GORLOV: That's good. We want more of that stuff. (*Enter MAJOR-GENERAL KHRIPUN, Chief of Communications.*)

KHRIPUN: May I come in, Comrade Commander?

GORLOV: Sit down. Why have you been slighting this correspondent?

KHRIPUN: This correspondent hasn't even approached me.

KRIKUN: I addressed myself to the Commissar.

GORLOV: Well the Commissar will have to get it into his head that I don't want the newspapermen insulted. Their work is important. The people must know how we fight. Look at all the heroes we have. And we must think about history. In fifty years people will open up a newspaper, and there as in a mirror they will see how we fought. It's a big thing.

KHRIPUN: Yes, Comrade Commander. (*To KRIKUN.*) Come to my office in an hour.

KRIKUN: Thanks.

GORLOV: But if people open our front-line newspapers, they will find very little there. You don't do a good job, Comrade Editor.

TIKHII: My fault, Comrade Commander. If you tell us what's wrong, we'll take it into consideration, we'll try to improve.

KHRIPUN: Well, today you turned out a whole page of rubbish.

TIKHII: Are you referring to the piece about communications?

KHRIPUN: What communications are you talking about? You just proved your own stupidity. I reported this to the Commander and he agrees with me.

TIKHII: But Comrade Commander, this was our correspondent's interview with Army Commander Ognev.

GORLOV (*laughing*): Do you think an army commander can't have piffle in his head? Especially Ognev. He's always in the clouds. And we're on terra firma. Cut your coat according to your cloth.

TIKHII: My fault. But in this case I think . . .

GORLOV: What do you think? You don't even know 2 x 2 in military affairs. And there you go—I think. . . . What kind of rot is this? (*Picks up paper and looks at it.*)

KHRIPUN: Right here. (*Points.*) Take this for instance.

GORLOV (*reading*): "The people who should know, refused to understand that today it is impossible to command without satisfactory radio communications. This is not a Civil War." Blabbermouth. What does he know about the Civil War? He was still wetting his diapers while we were fighting Fourteen Nations. We'll crush any enemy. Not with radio communications but by heroism and valor. And all he does is whine. He can't command. We'll teach him how.

KRIKUN: And I . . .

KHRIPUN: Just think. (*Reads.*) "Only our backwardness, the stupidity of some of our commanders and chiefs, stand in the way of our putting radio communications to their proper use. We have all the conditions necessary to set it up."

KRIKUN: Hm-hm. But this is a criticism of the command.

KHRIPUN: That's nothing—listen to this. (*Reads.*) "The Germans' radio communications, like all their other communications, are good, and we must learn from the enemy and surpass him." Do you understand what this means? What will any commander of Red Army men who reads this think about our communications? Will it raise his fighting spirit? Why should we boost Fascist communications? Who wants that?

GORLOV: Well, you can't blame the editor for this. It's all pretty hazy to him. But Ognev will be here today. We'll ask him about it. (*To TIKHII.*) And as for you, I warn you that if you stick your nose into other people's business instead of writing about our great heroes from day to day, I'll make it tough for you.

TIKHII: My fault, Comrade Commander. We'll take care of it. We'll try to improve things.

GORLOV: You can go now. (*Exit TIKHII and KRIKUN. But after TIKHII has left through door, KRIKUN returns.*)

KRIKUN: Pardon me, Comrade Commander. As a representative of the Moscow press, I shall have to write a critical article about your front-line newspaper. Really, as you have correctly noted, it doesn't concern itself sufficiently with the lives of the rank-and-file heroes.

GORLOV: Go right ahead. Get these ideas into our editor's head. It's for his own good.

KRIKUN: At your service. May I leave?

GORLOV: You may leave. (*Exit KRIKUN.*)

KHRIPUN: He's begun putting on airs.

GORLOV: Who has?

KHRIPUN: Ognev. He's making a marshal of himself.

GORLOV: That's his youth. He started fighting as a colonel. In three months he became a major-general. And now he's an army commander. That's why he has a swelled head. But he's not strong enough; so he's become pretty sly, using a pen to justify himself.

KHRIPUN: He's a foxy one.

GORLOV: That's clear. If his affairs were in better shape, he wouldn't be giving out such articles. Soldiers don't write; they fight. Do what you're supposed to. There'll always be pen-pushers to write up what took place and even what didn't take place. (*Laughs.*)

KHRIPUN: Quite true, quite true. You belong to the Suvorov school, Ivan Ivanovich.

GORLOV: Now let's see what it is you have. (*KHRIPUN hands him a paper. GORLOV reads and writes something.*) Have communications been established with the cavalry unit?

KHRIPUN: Not yet, Comrade Commander.

GORLOV: Why not?

KHRIPUN: We've taken all the necessary steps. I think we'll have communications with Petrov in a day or so.

GORLOV: You better see to it, or I'll take your head off.

KHRIPUN: Everything will be taken care of. May I leave?

GORLOV: You may. Come by in an hour. We'll have supper together. Today is a sort of holiday for me.

KHRIPUN: Thank you, Comrade Commander. May I bring something to toast you with?

GORLOV: What've you got?

KHRIPUN: I've got half a dozen bottles of old cognac left.

GORLOV: Not really!—Bring them along!

KHRIPUN: Yes, Comrade Commander. (*Exit. GORLOV presses button. ADJUTANT enters.*)

GORLOV: Is Ognev here?

ADJUTANT: He hasn't arrived yet.

GORLOV: How about Kolos?

ADJUTANT: He hasn't arrived yet either. There's a pretty heavy snow-storm blowing.

GORLOV: Is Gaidar in his office?

ADJUTANT: Yes. The Member of the Military Council is talking with the Chief of the Political Department. Your brother has arrived. He says his name is Miron Ivanovich Gorlov.

GORLOV: Miron? That's impossible. Get him over here—quickly. . . . (*Rises to greet MIRON, who enters.*) Miron, where have you come from?

MIRON: Right out of the skies. (*They embrace and kiss.*) How are you getting along?

GORLOV: Fighting.

MIRON: You're still the same. How's your health?

GORLOV: It's still pretty good.

MIRON: You haven't changed. You haven't even turned grey. And I haven't seen you for twelve years. You look well.

GORLOV: A soldier's appearance is not changed by years, but by bayonet, bullet, or shell. Why have you let yourself go so? You're seven years younger than I, and you're all white. What's the matter with you?

MIRON: It's the war. It's not easy for us civilians. I got grey during the Finnish War, and now I've turned white.

GORLOV: Don't worry so much. Learn from us.

MIRON: It doesn't work. Is it all right to smoke?

GORLOV: Why ask? Go ahead, smoke. Do whatever you like. We're very simple here. I hate standing on ceremony. We're soldiers here. You can smoke, drink, curse—as long as your work keeps humming.

MIRON: Everything's all right when work keeps humming.

GORLOV: Why haven't you written? Grown conceited, Miron? Huh?

MIRON: Of course not. When I was at the Institute I wrote you. I wrote you often, as I remember, because I kept asking for money. You sent me money once but you never answered again.

GORLOV: You don't say? I never got any other letter from you!

MIRON: Then I was sent to America.

GORLOV: So you were in America!

MIRON: For two years.

GORLOV: That's good. Well, what's it like? Is it lousy? (*Laughs.*)

MIRON: I was sent to Ford's. I worked in the foundry-shop and on the conveyor for two years. Always as a plain worker.

GORLOV: Oh! I thought you had just gone to look around a bit. At one time we were sent abroad, too—to Germany and France. I didn't like Germany—dull. But we had a wonderful time in France. There was nothing we didn't see. It was a pity we were called back so soon. Yes, we had a wonderful time, wonderful. It's pleasant to think about.

MIRON: And whenever I think of the Ford conveyor I get chills.

GORLOV: Why?

MIRON: It was terribly hard work, especially in the beginning. I almost went crazy trying to keep up because if I hadn't kept up they would have fired me. I could barely drag my feet after me when I left the shop at the end of the day. I couldn't eat or drink. I used to drop off to sleep like a dead man.

GORLOV: Is that so! . . . How is Valya? Have you any children?

MIRON: No. Valya is working in a plant as a designer. This is the way we live. I come home in the morning. She's asleep. When I get up she's already at work. For three years we've been quarrelling and kissing over the phone. I don't know why she hasn't left me. (*Laughs.*)

GORLOV: She won't leave you. Even though you've let yourself go, you're handsome. And women like handsome men.

MIRON: What are you talking about? My mug looks like a crumpled pillow from sleepless nights.

GORLOV: You should have had a son. My Serezhka is in the Army already.

MIRON: Really? I'd like to see him.

GORLOV: He'll be here. I've sent for him. He isn't far from here. Are you still busy making automobiles?

MIRON: I stopped making them a long while ago. Aviation's got me now. I'm the director of a huge plant.

GORLOV: So it's you we ought to be bawling out. That's our weakest point. You're not producing enough.

MIRON: We know that. We're trying. You'll be getting a new present soon. We were in a fever for two months, day and night, but we made it. The machine's speed is so great, Göring will burst with envy.

GORLOV: Don't waste so much time on speed. What's important is to give us more planes. See how many planes the Germans have.

MIRON: Stop singing that song. We're tired of hearing it. We've had enough of it. The devil with it!

GORLOV: Why? I don't understand. . . .

MIRON: For years some of our military strategists kept shouting: "Give us more planes. Speed's a secondary thing. Quantity is what's important." And we civilians listened to you, like fools.

GORLOV: That's what you were supposed to do.

MIRON: If we'd continued to listen to such strategists, by now we'd have been done away with. The Germans would have picked us off like quail.

GORLOV: You're joking.

MIRON: It's from such jokes that I went white prematurely. I assure you not another aviation industry in the world could have got itself reorganized in so short a time, but we paid dearly for it with our strength. We can thank this reorganization for our absolutely modern speed planes. . . . I don't know who else could have lived through such strain.

GORLOV: Nevertheless, numbers are still the important thing, both on the ground and in the air. Numbers win. They are the essence, the soul of military affairs. That's what's important now.

MIRON: And Suvorov said—you fight not with numbers but with knowledge. Quality is the important thing.

GORLOV: That's a fine how-do-you-do. Are you trying to say we don't know how to fight? We've enough of that kind of knowledge to spare. We know and respect Suvorov, but even he would find it

pretty hot now. You civilians don't understand that. Better tell me how you live.

MIRON: There's been much good and much bad. I've just flown in from Moscow. Comrade Stalin sent for me. A designer and I demonstrated a new model for him.

GORLOV: How does Comrade Stalin look? Has he changed?

MIRON: What can I tell you? I didn't notice. I made a report on our plant. Had to make it short and to the point. That's difficult. There are many problems. So I noted his questions and advice carefully but had no time to look at him closely.

GORLOV: That's a fine thing. You've been to see our leader and can't even tell us about it. You've become a real bureaucrat. That's no good.

MIRON: Maybe not. I asked him about you.

GORLOV: What did he have to say?

MIRON: He told me a German fighter plane landed somewhere near here yesterday. It had evidently got lost. It's a new model. The propeller is bent but otherwise it's in good shape. Comrade Stalin suggested I fly out here to look at it instead of waiting until it's moved. We don't waste any time this way.

GORLOV: Just a minute. (*Presses button. Enter ADJUTANT.*) Get me the Chief of Military Aviation Communications on the phone.

ADJUTANT: Yes, Comrade Commander. (*Exit.*)

GORLOV: How did Comrade Stalin learn about it?

MIRON: You let him know.

GORLOV: No, I didn't.

MIRON: Then I don't know how.

GORLOV: What else did he say? Was he angry?

MIRON: With whom?

GORLOV: With me!

MIRON: No, he didn't say anything else about you. (*Enter ADJUTANT.*)

ADJUTANT: Major-General Udovichenko is on the phone.

GORLOV (*picking up receiver*): Listen. What's the matter with you? Why didn't you let me know a plane landed yesterday, a German

fighter? . . . When? . . . I don't remember. That can't be true. . . . You phoned me? That's impossible. . . . Well, we'll let it go. But who informed Moscow? Aha! You had time to inform Moscow—but how about your commander? . . . That means you didn't report it properly. You ought to talk less. Your words pour out like peas out of a pod—can't make head nor tail of you. In the future, report such happenings in person and not by phone. Understand?

MIRON: Where's the plane?

GORLOV: Where's the plane? . . . I'll see—just a second. Forty kilometers away.

MIRON: I'll run right over there by car.

GORLOV: Where do you think you're going? It's night now and you wouldn't get there till morning in all this snow.

MIRON: That's nothing.

GORLOV (*at the phone*): Listen. See that this plane is here by 8 A.M. sharp. You understand?

MIRON: Only move it carefully, or—

GORLOV: Move it carefully. See that it remains all in one piece. You'll answer with your head. (*Puts down the receiver.*) Don't worry, you'll have your little bird by the morning. Everything goes by clock-work here. You sit and discuss, but we give an order. Fulfill it or die.

MIRON: We'll see.

GORLOV: We shall. Did you see the papers in Moscow today?

MIRON: No, I didn't have the time to. Why?

GORLOV: I was awarded my fourth Order today.

MIRON: Really? My congratulations. (*Grasps brother's hand.*) Congratulations. I'm afraid by the end of the war there'll be no room left to hang them. (*Laughs.*)

GORLOV: We'll find room. (*Laughs.*) Just so long as I deserve them!

MIRON: That's the way it is with you generals. Either your chests are covered with medals or your faces with bruises. True, your kind don't suffer much from bruises. We suffer from them more than you do.

GORLOV: You probably deserve them.

MIRON: Probably. But if I were in the government I'd see to it you were bruised so that everybody could see the marks. I'd give you fewer Orders.

GORLOV: Quit that, Miron. Envy's a bad thing.

MIRON: I'm not at all envious, Vanya. I see the storm. The Red Army men, the junior commanders, and even the divisional commanders should be decorated, but your kind, the higher-ups, can wait till the war's over. I'd think up some special sort of a medal that would cover your whole chest so that a kilometer away people could see a strategist coming. Everyone would respect you and bow to you.

GORLOV: Still cracking jokes! You're just as you used to be when you were a boy. (*Enter ADJUTANT.*)

ADJUTANT: Major-General Ognev and Major-General Kolos have arrived.

GORLOV: Show them in. Ask the Chief of Staff and the Members of the Military Council to come in.

ADJUTANT: Yes, Comrade Commander. (*Exit.*)

MIRON: Where shall I go?

GORLOV: Wait. I won't be long. I'll introduce you to my generals and then we'll go and have supper together. Are you very tired?

MIRON: Oh, no! (*Enter OGNEV and KOLOS.*)

OGNEV: Major-General Ognev. Reporting according to instructions.

KOLOS: Major-General Kolos. Reporting according to instructions.

GORLOV: Greetings. Meet my brother; he's director of an aviation plant. (*They shake hands.*) Be seated. How was your trip?

KOLOS: Not so good, Comrade Commander.

OGNEV: There were big snowdrifts along the way. We had to push more than we rode.

GORLOV: You should have come by plane.

KOLOS: The weather didn't permit that.

GORLOV: But my brother flew here from Moscow.

MIRON: When I took off from Moscow, the weather was good. When I got here, I thought I'd crash. I had to land forty kilometers away and drive up by car.

GORLOV: Really? I thought you had come directly here.

MIRON: No.

(Enter BLAGONRAVOV, Chief of Staff, and GAIDAR, Member of Military Council. Generals stand up.)

GORLOV: Meet my brother. He came here on assignment from Comrade Stalin. He's director of an aviation plant.

GAIDAR: Pleased to meet you.

BLAGONRAVOV: Chief of Staff of the Front.

GORLOV: Be seated. Stay with us a while, Miron Ivanovich. We won't be long. Later I'd like you all to have supper with me. Begin your report, Chief of Staff.

BLAGONRAVOV: I think the Commander of the 17th Division should make his report on the carrying out of Order No. 761 first, and then Major-General Kolos.

GAIDAR: That's right.

GORLOV: Go ahead, Ognev. Make it short.

OGNEV: I'll make it *very* short, Comrade Commander. The Order has been carried out, though I don't at all understand for what purpose.

GORLOV: Hold your horses. You'll understand the purpose soon.

KOLOS: The Order has been carried out. But I must also admit I didn't understand the reason for it.

GORLOV: I'd expect you, old man, to report differently. Order fulfilled—and that's all. Then wait until things were explained to you. He can be excused because of his youth. As for you, you should know that every vegetable has its season. (*Laughs.*) Isn't that so?

KOLOS: So it is.

OGNEV: As far as vegetables are concerned.

GORLOV: Nobody asked you. Chief of Staff, let's hear from you.

BLAGONRAVOV (*taking some papers out of a folder and walking over to map, and pulling it down*): All our attempts to take Kolokol Station have been unsuccessful up to now. The Germans have fortified it strongly and have been keeping our troops at bay for two months. To take Kolokol would mean to force the Germans to immediate withdrawal across the river. The Commander of the Front,

Lieutenant-General Gorlov, ordered us to work out the following operation. Army Commander Ognev is to set up a section of men to act as a shield at the northern approaches to the Kolokol fortifications while he himself with a unit of Kolos' Cavalry breaks through the enemy defense at the village of Aleksandrovka and moves on to Voroni Ploty. South of Kolokol, the Tanks Corps together with Gunner Paratroops are to make a breakthrough and take control of the two roads. The Germans, in order to avoid complete encirclement, will be forced to abandon Kolokol Station and move towards the only road left free, but it will be easy for Ognev to block this road from Voroni Ploty. Only one means of retreat remains and that is through snowdrifts, without roads, leaving behind all their technical equipment. Then Kolos' Cavalry will finish off the job.

GORLOV: But the main thing will be General Winter. (*Laughs.*)

BLAGONRAVOV: You said it. There will be nothing left of the German forces. Their aviation won't be able to help them; the snowstorm is not subsiding but getting stronger. The order has already been drafted in accordance with plans of the Commander of the Front.

GORLOV: Do you see now why it was necessary to carry out the preliminary preparations?

OGNEV: I do.

GORLOV: Here are your orders. Do your best.

(*Hands them an order. OGNEV and KOLOS sit down at table, take out maps, read order, and make notes on maps.*)

GAIDAR (*to COMMANDER*): To speak frankly, I am worried for fear the Germans will concentrate many tanks at the Station. What may happen is that they will throw them against Ognev's rear.

GORLOV (*interrupting*): Nonsense. We have accurate information: they have fifty tanks at the station. They've dug in and are waiting.

GAIDAR: And supposing they attack from across the river?

GORLOV: And supposing there is an earthquake? (*Laughs.*) The most important thing is quick action. Catch them unawares and destroy them.

GAIDAR: We know we can catch them unawares. We've done it more than once. But to encircle them and destroy them . . .

MIRON: That doesn't happen so often. . . .

GORLOV: It depends on who's in command. Have you signed the order, Comrade Gaidar?

GAIDAR: I did. Everything looked all right but my hand shook as it has never shaken before.

GORLOV: That's because you're still a civilian at heart. Your hands always shake. What is it that bothers you?

GAIDAR: That wedge at Kolokol. Supposing, all of a sudden . . .

GORLOV: In war, my friend, things always happen all of a sudden. What you need is a spirit of daring. Isn't that right, Chief of Staff?

BLAGONRAVOV: Consider and dare. That's what Moltke said.

OGNEV: That's not quite accurate, Comrade Chief of Staff. Moltke said: First consider and then dare. First weigh it in your mind. That means measure your cloth seven times before you cut it.

GORLOV: Right you are.

OGNEV: If I'm right then your order, Comrade Commander of the Front, baffles me as an army commander, though it makes me very happy as a person because Voroni Ploty is my birthplace and my father's there. Maybe he's still alive.

GORLOV: That is good. Your father will be liberated.

GAIDAR: How is it that your father is there?

OGNEV: In the fall, at the time of the breakthrough, Voroni Ploty was suddenly captured by the Germans.

GORLOV: Well, let's get going, let's get going, young man. (*Laughs.*) He's become a pen-pusher. Have you read his interview on communications?

GAIDAR: I have.

GORLOV: He's trying to become a writer. (*Laughs.*) Go to it.

OGNEV: You're always laughing at me. But rest assured it wouldn't bother me at all if you were sure actual events wouldn't laugh at us later.

GORLOV: What are you hinting at? Come clean.

OGNEV: This order reminds me of the last one. You laughed then too.

GORLOV: I was right to laugh. Didn't we beat the Germans and take the city?

OGNEV: Yes, we took the city and beat the Germans. But how? Whose victory was it? It was the valor of the Red Army men, the heroism of the noncoms and the junior commanders, that took it. They won in spite of the order, which had put them in a most unfavorable position. This is a fact.

GORLOV: That's interesting. Go on. (*Takes notes.*)

OGNEV: And then—the same story repeats itself. You speak of daring. There is no daring in this order. There isn't even a hint of daring there. It lacks thought. It's full of hurrahs and cockiness. You'd think our enemy was a fool and was asleep. Is that the way you encircle the enemy? All you did was to draw a circle with one twist of your hand. And we're expected to gallop up and surround them. If you like, I can prove its shortcomings on any point. Where the hell do you think you're sending the Tank Corps? It's clear. No sooner do I start pushing forward than the Germans will immediately send their tanks into my rear. . . .

GORLOV (*interrupting*): That's enough, Major-General Ognev. You have forgotten you're not at a Young Communist League meeting but with the Commander of the Front. I didn't call you here to have a discussion.

OGNEV: I've been past YCL age for a long time.

GORLOV: You're past YCL age—but it's evident that hasn't been for long or you wouldn't be interrupting your Commander.

OGNEV: At fault, Comrade Commander.

GORLOV: All right, then. And you, old man, what thoughts are you twisting into your moustache?

KOLOS (*rising, visibly excited*): Comrade Commander! Dear Ivan Ivanovich, we went through the Civil War together. We started out in life together, tasted of happiness and of sorrow together. I'm ready to die for you. But truth stands above everything else. And the truth is on Major-General Ognev's side. The Tank Corps shouldn't be pushed off the devil knows where, but should be assigned to Ognev's Army.

GORLOV: That's enough out of you. War is a risk, not arithmetic. It's about time you learned that.

GAIDAR: And I think war is calculation and arithmetic. I think we should hear them out.

GORLOV: Everything is clear to me. If you want to listen to them, take them into your office. (*Silence.*) Any questions?

OGNEV: None whatever, Comrade Commander. I only have a question to the Chief of Staff.

BLAGONRAVOV: If you please.

OGNEV: Is Udivitelnyi still Chief of Reconnaissance?

BLAGONRAVOV: He is.

OGNEV: You'll pardon me but he's full of nothing but lies. There are more than two hundred tanks at the Station.

GORLOV: What's that? (*Laughs.*) Where did they come from? Did they fall out of the moon?

OGNEV: Yesterday one prisoner admitted to three hundred and another to two hundred. Even if we take a mean average—

GORLOV: They both lied. They always lie. They want to confuse us. That's their method. (*Presses a button. Enter ADJUTANT.*) Get me Udivitelnyi. Quick.

ADJUTANT: Yes, Comrade Commander.

OGNEV: The guerrillas told my scouts of the 30th Division that five tank-trains have passed on to Kolokol in the last ten days. What do they need so much gasoline for? It's pretty clear there are more than fifty tanks there.

GORLOV: But no three hundred.

OGNEV: How many then?

GORLOV: Where would they go, so many tanks? Only a fool would take all the tanks away from the front and concentrate them at one station like Kolokol.

OGNEV: It's not only a station. It's a fortress. A springboard. Hasn't General Orlov been dancing around this station for two months unable to accomplish anything?

GORLOV: And now we'll take it in one fell swoop. Your guerrilla lied. They always lie a lot but do very little.

GAIDAR: Our intelligence is in a bad way. We've got to do something about it.

GORLOV: Why? I don't agree. (*Enter UDIVITELNYI.*)

UDIVITELNYI: Colonel Udivitelnyi, reporting as ordered.

GORLOV: How many tanks are there at Kolokol Station?

UDIVITELNYI: Fifty, Comrade Commander.

GORLOV: That's all.

UDIVITELNYI: They may have brought up a few more in these past few days, but I doubt it.

GORLOV: And Ognev says there are three hundred.

UDIVITELNYI: Where from, Comrade Commander? Along the entire front they haven't got more than five hundred tanks now.

GORLOV: That's correct.

OGNEV: Then why are the Germans getting so much gasoline over to Kolokol?

UDIVITELNYI: I don't know. They're probably preparing for a future attack. They've got their stores there.

OGNEV: Who's in command there now?

UDIVITELNYI: I wouldn't know. It used to be whosis—I can't remember his name. He has a hard name. Major-General von Something. He was recalled. What kind of von has replaced him, I don't know.

OGNEV: What is their firing power now?

UDIVITELNYI: The usual Four Division . . . I'm really not sure.

OGNEV: Have they any Ski regiments?

UDIVITELNYI: I don't think they have any regiments. They may have a few small units. You know the Germans haven't prepared themselves for the winter.

OGNEV: To Hell with you. I'm not interested in what you think. I'm interested in what the Germans actually have. Do you know or don't you? Give us an answer.

KOLOS: Don't get excited, Volodia.

GORLOV: What are you yelling about? Do you think you're at some market?

OGNEV: You ask him why he's lying as if he were at a market. What does he mean? "Probably"; "I think"; "Maybe"; "Possibly."

How can you work out your orders with such confused intelligence data?

BLAGONRAVOV: We have our figures. Don't worry.

OGNEV: Figures! The aviation hasn't been working for five days because of the storm. What other data do you have? The devil knows what the Germans have got done in these five days. Comrade Member of the Military Council, we can't go on this way. What kind of business is this? (*Raises hand to bandaged head.*) Phew! My head is splitting.

GAIDAR (*getting up*): Comrade Commander, I must have a few words with you. May I see you for a few minutes?

GORLOV: What about?

GAIDAR: I'll tell you. (*Goes into another room. GORLOV follows.*)

KOLOS: Calm down, Volodia. Does it hurt very much?

OGNEV: It does.

UDIVITELNYI: I don't understand your hysterics, Major-General Ognev. I consider that . . .

KOLOS (*interrupting*): Listen, Comrade Udivitelnyi: you'd better keep quiet. If he puts a bullet through you I'll prove to any tribunal that it was justified.

UDIVITELNYI: I can leave if that will pacify your delicate nerves. (*Exit.*)

MIRON: What a specimen!

BLAGONRAVOV: No—he's just a small person with limited abilities.

MIRON: Why keep him on then?

BLAGONRAVOV: I didn't appoint him. Do you think I have it easy with him? I've got to make the best of it.

MIRON: But why?

BLAGONRAVOV: How shall I explain it to you? He has fought alongside the Commander ever since the Civil War. He's an old, honest, deserving worker. But he's weak. (*Enter Commander and Member of Military Council.*)

GORLOV (*to OGNEV*): Now, listen. Your left-hand neighbor, Orlov, Commander of the 25th, will move on to Aleksandrovka and will guard your rear. Your corridor won't be blocked. Don't worry. Even

if they've brought up a few tanks, it's nothing. They will be afraid to come out into the snow from their fortified positions. I warn you. The order must be accurately carried out. I'll have your head for the slightest deviation. Don't forget that. And I reprimand you for your unworthy behavior here. In the future I'll be even stricter. Is that clear? I'm asking you—is that clear?

OGNEV: It is, Comrade Commander. Have I your permission to leave?

GORLOV: You may leave.

CURTAIN

ACT ONE

SCENE TWO

Apartment of the Commander of the Front. No one on stage. Only noises from adjoining room are heard. The guests are there. They are toasting GORLOV. Enter MIRON and GAIDAR. MIRON puts wine bottle, glasses on table. Fills glasses.

MIRON: Let's have one drink.

GAIDAR: Thank you, but I don't drink at all.

MIRON: But you were drinking at the table.

GAIDAR: I kept filling my glass with soda water. For a long time I haven't been able to drink. My heart's a bit tricky. •

MIRON: Then I'll have to drink alone. To your health.

(Enter SERGEI GORLOV, Guards Lieutenant Artilleryman. Holds wine-glass in hand.)

SERGEI: My dear Uncle, it's not nice to take a bottle off the table and run away. Please, please fill my glass.

MIRON *(filling SERGEI's glass)*: You should stop drinking, Serezhka, or you'll get terribly drunk.

SERGEI: Don't hold me back. When I'm at the front, I don't drink

at all. I always give my 100 grams to Chekalenko, the Artillery Commander. Today I want to get drunk in honor of your visit. Yes—I told my apostles how you taught me to fish, and how you spanked me once. I remember everything. (*Embraces MIRON.*)

MIRON: What apostles are you talking about?

SERGEI: That's what I call my artillerymen. They're real apostles. They perform miracles every day.

MIRON: Apostles! (*Laughs.*) That's a good one!

SERGEI: Comrade Member of the Military Council, what do you say? Isn't my uncle a swell guy?

MIRON: Serezhka!

SERGEI: No! Come on. What do you say?

GAIDAR: He's a very swell guy.

SERGEI: See? It's unanimous. My apostles think so, too. They've fallen in love with you. Upon my word as a Guardsman.

MIRON: What's this? Are you telling your Guards about a civilian uncle? That's an interesting theme you've found. You ought to tell them something about military life.

SERGEI: After a battle, we all like to talk about civilian life. I know everything about each member of my battery. And they know everything about me. We live as if we were one family. And do you know who the father of our family is?

MIRON: The political instructor?

SERGEI: No. It's Artillery Commander Chekalenko. He's forty years old, fat; he has a moustache. Under fire he's a lion. You could die laughing at his stories. Come visit me, Uncle. You'll meet living apostles: Ostapenko, Shaiametov, Bashlykov, Vaska Sokol—you couldn't find such people if you toured the world. (*Shouts of "To the health of the Commander of the Front," "Hurrah," and clinking of wine glasses are heard offstage.*) I have no desire to drink to the health of the Commander of the Front.

MIRON: Why not?

SERGEI: I drank more than I should have drunk to my father's health but I don't want to drink to the Commander's health. Don't be angry with me, Comrade Member of the Military Council. I only say such

things here. I know the rules. The Commander must be respected and obeyed without question. But I won't drink to his health today. That's that. And now Guards Lieutenant, home to bed with you.

GAIDAR: That's right.

SERGEI: I'm on my way. Just let me tell you what I mean. Why isn't Major-General Ognev, my Commander, among the guests? Why not? Do you know? I asked my father and all he did was to curse. He doesn't like him. Why not? He refuses to understand that my Commander, Major-General Ognev, is like . . .

MIRON: Chapaev?

SERGEI: No.

MIRON: Bagration?

SERGEI: No.

MIRON: SUVOV . . .

SERGEI: Don't make a joke of it.

GAIDAR: Well, like whom, then? (*A pause.*)

SERGEI: He's—Ognev. Vladimir Ognev. That's something people will have to get through their heads. But my father isn't a very farsighted sort of person. Too bad! (*Wipes his eyes.*) Too bad. (*Throws down his wine glass and exits. Strumming of guitar and quiet singing are heard offstage.*)

MIRON: It must be pretty hard for you to work with my brother.

GAIDAR: I'm a civilian. Before the war I was on a civilian job. I'm having a tough time of it now. You've got to learn military science. This isn't the Civil War. Everything's become very complicated.

MIRON: And do you consider that my brother knows how you've got to fight these days?

GAIDAR: He has the Civil War experience and his commanders respect his authority. He fights as well as he can.

MIRON: He fights as well as he can . . . as well as he can? But how long will it take before he begins to fight as he should?

GAIDAR (*laughing*): We're all waiting for that.

MIRON: Maybe you shouldn't.

GAIDAR: Shouldn't what?

MIRON: Wait. It's too hard and costly to wait.

GAIDAR: There's no one else here.

MIRON: Yes . . . But what about Ognev?

GAIDAR: Very gifted, but too young.

MIRON (*laughing*): Didn't participate in the Civil War. Too few decorations. Is that what you mean?

GAIDAR: Unfortunately that still plays an important role among our High Command. No matter how gifted a young man is, if he didn't fight in the Civil War he isn't accepted. When they meet him they'll slap his back, but actually they hold him in contempt. How often I have to prove the worth of the young ones to the old ones! It takes a lot of persuading.

MIRON: Don't spend so much time proving and persuading, but declare war on ignoramuses and a stupid attitude toward modern military science.

GAIDAR: While we're at war it's impossible to do that.

MIRON: Why? I'm sure you remember what it was like in industry. At first old comrades, deserving and full of authority, directed many of our plants and trusts. They were proud of their calloused hands, their booming voices and their strong language. But they didn't know anything about technique; they didn't even care to. They didn't know how to manage plants. All they talked about was their background of poverty. But they were unwilling to enrich their fund of knowledge by adding new experiences to it. And what results did we see? The factories were in a terrible state because almost all of them were in the hands of such "authorities," such conceited ignoramuses. If the Central Committee of the Party hadn't made a radical change and promoted engineers, technicians, people with the proper knowledge to leading posts, the workers would undoubtedly have said: "The Hell with your authorities and your veterans if they don't know how to conduct a factory." That's a fact. No matter how loudly those duffers yelled, no one gave them any support. The people like leaders with knowledge and with common sense, and that is the kind they demand.

GAIDAR: War makes things more complicated. A radical change here might break us. We'll have to look for another way out. The enemy

is on our territory. There are far worse men than your brother we have to contend with. Anything to liberate our country.

MIRON: Well, keep it up; but I'm sure you'll get awfully tired of it very soon. As for me, I declared war on my brother today. I'm to be here only two days, but I'll make that buffalo's blood boil.

GAIDAR (*laughing*): How?

MIRON: If the guests had come an hour later, they would have found all the dishes broken. My dear brother crashed one plate to the floor so hard there was nothing left of it but sparks. (*Laughs. Enter ADJUTANT.*)

ADJUTANT: Comrade Member of the Military Council, permit me to make my report.

GAIDAR: Go ahead.

ADJUTANT: There has just been a telephone call from Moscow. You're expected in Moscow at the State Defense Committee tomorrow at 6:30 P.M. Here's the message. (*Hands him a paper.*)

GAIDAR: Order a plane for me at 7:30 A.M.

ADJUTANT: Yes, Comrade Member of the Military Council. (*Exit.*)

MIRON: It's a pity you're not leaving the day after tomorrow. We could have flown together.

GAIDAR: That would have been swell. I'll call the Commander out now. (*Exit to outer room.*)

MIRON (*pouring wine into his glass*): Many guests, but no one to drink with. Well, (*raises his glass*) your health, Valya darling. (*Drinks. Enter Commander and GAIDAR.*)

GORLOV (*laughing*): Look at my brother, getting drunk all by himself. I like that. He's set himself up as a critic, but . . .

MIRON: You wait. When your guests all leave, I'll make it hot for you.

GORLOV: Don't make such a noise. You're not at home. You're at the front. And I'm in command here. I have only to give the order and you'll find yourself in the guardhouse in a twinkling. Get it? (*Laughs.*)

MIRON: The Military Council Member will come to my defense.

GORLOV: I'll admit a Military Council Member can protest; but if a

Commander is firm in his decision—and he must be—God himself couldn't help you.

MIRON: Oh—you! Buffalo. You've been spoiled, you old devil, you've been spoiled.

GORLOV: Cut it out. I'm as good as my word. Here's to your health. (*Takes wine glass and drinks.*)

GAIDAR: Listen Ivan Ivanovich, I've been called to Moscow. I have to be at the State Defense Committee at 6:30 P.M.

GORLOV: Alone?

GAIDAR: Yes.

GORLOV: Well, tomorrow you'll take off.

GAIDAR: We should have a little talk. I'll go get my things packed. Come over to my place in an hour.

GORLOV: All right. When the guests leave, I'll come by.

GAIDAR (*to MIRON*): Good-bye. I hope you're still here when I get back.

MIRON: We'll meet in Moscow. I'll be at the State Defense Committee myself. Have a good trip.

GAIDAR: Thanks. (*Exit, escorted by GORLOV. After a pause, enter guests with wine glasses in their hands. Civilians are among the military. MAJOR-GENERAL KHRIPUN is in front.*)

KHRIPUN: Where's the Commander? There's quite a toast awaiting him.

MIRON: He'll be right back.

KHRIPUN: I propose a toast to our dear Commander's brother. Your brother is a brilliant military leader. I might even say a genius. His army loves him. And we're sure you're worthy of him. Your health.

MIRON (*smiling*): Now, now. I'm a very insignificant person. (*Enter commander.*)

KHRIPUN: Comrade Commander, that famous and popular favorite, honored actor, Comrade Grustnyi, would like to say a few words and to sing our favorite song as a farewell. Comrade Grustnyi. (*Hands him guitar.*)

GORLOV: You'd better sing. Don't bother to speak.

GRUSTNYI: Just allow me half a minute. I'm exalted with happiness.

The three months I have spent among you at the front have moved me so, have tempered me, have filled me with the noblest feelings, sacred feelings of love and hate . . .

MIRON: Listen, Grustnyi; you'd better sing; you'll strain your vocal chords with speaking . . .

VOICES: Sing, sing. Don't talk . . . (COMRADE MESTNYI, *Chairman of the City Executive Committee, bursts forward, a glass of wine in his hand.*)

MESTNYI: Let me pass. As Mayor of the city I protest the suppression of intellectuals. Actor Grustnyi, continue.

GRUSTNYI (*wiping eyes with handkerchief*): All right. I will express my exaltation, my ideas in song. (*Sits down on chair. Plays guitar. Sings.*) "Open your gates, quietly . . ." (*When GRUSTNYI finishes song, everyone applauds.*)

VOICES: Bravo, bravo, bravo. (*He bows.*)

MESTNYI: A wonderful performance, wonderful. And now let's have a Lezghinka. (*Begins to dance.*)

GORLOV: Stop, stop. Wait a minute, Mayor. I must excuse myself, my dear guests. I've got some work to do.

MESTNYI: We've got to get to work, too. I'll be working into the morning. I'll give all my strength to the front. Three military-civil cheers for our guest commander, who didn't let the Fascists enter our city. To our strategist and savior. (*All civilian guests yell "Hurrah" and rush to shake GORLOV's hand. MESTNYI tries to kiss him.*)

GORLOV: Thank you, civilian comrades, and thank you, my comrades-in-arms, for your warm feelings. However, frankness impels me to remark first that what many of you have said today is not true. The great, I might even say historic, victories, along the front entrusted to my command, were not brought about by me alone. That is not true.

MESTNYI (*yelling*): I don't agree with you. That isn't true. It's not true.

GORLOV: Comrade Mestnyi, it would be better if you kept quiet. Our victories at the front are just as much the victories of our gallant Red Army men as mine.

MESTNYI: True. True.

GORLOV: Secondly, I cannot agree with you on something else you've been saying. That is that I'm a great and brilliant military leader, even a genius. You see I'm just a simple, modest person. When I went to war I had graduated from my University—three years in a rural school. That is all the education I've had. I'm no theorist. I'm an old battle horse. Recently one of the foreign correspondents said of me, "Commander Gorlov doesn't follow the usual pattern of military men." These bourgeois specialists can't understand how a Gorlov, a man of the soil, right out of the earth, neither an academician nor a theoretician, can be defeating the much vaunted German generals, who are both theoreticians and academicians. (*Laughs. Applause.*)

VOICES: Bravo.

MESTNYI: Gorlov is beating them and will continue to beat them. That's the sort of stuff we're made of. (*Applause.*)

GORLOV: That's it, Comrade Mestnyi. You're quite right. It's all a matter of your spirit. Our soul is simple and honest. There's no foxiness in us. Don't bother us and everything is all right. But just try getting funny with us . . . and you'd better watch out. What's important about a military leader is his soul. If he's brave, gallant, tenacious, then nothing scares him. We're that and to spare. Am I right?

VOICES: Right, right. (*Applause.*)

GORLOV: I'm not used to sitting in an office poring over maps. This isn't an academy. The main thing is to go out after the enemy and crush him wherever you find him. Don't ponder—act! Right?

VOICES: Right! Right!

GORLOV: Unfortunately there are those army generals who have not yet grasped this simple truth. I have a few book strategists who talk about nothing but military culture. I have to spend a lot of time getting their heads to work properly.

MIRON: I wouldn't be so proud of that. We still have many ignorant commanders, commanders who know nothing about modern warfare. That's our difficulty. Bravery alone won't win wars for you. In addition to being brave, you must know how to fight to win a war, how to fight along modern lines. You must learn modern warfare. Civil War experiences are not enough these days.

GORLOV: See, even my brother is talking about culture. But I ask you, what kind of culture can you talk about in a war when war itself is such an uncultured affair? Our craft is the roughest there is. We can't wear the white gloves of culture. Once again, let me thank you for your warm feelings, my comrades. Go and rest up. We soldiers have to get to work. Correct, Comrade General?

KHRIPUN: Quite so, Comrade*Commander.

MESTNYI: Let's finish our drinks, Comrades, and get back to our work, too. Finish our drinks and give all our strength to the front. (*Pours more wine into his glass.*)

GRUSTNYI: May I have your autograph, please. (*Hands GORLOV a pad.*)

GORLOV: Of course. (*Signs.*)

GRUSTNYI: Thank you. This is the happiest day of my life. Good-bye.

ALL: Good-bye. Good-bye.

(*Voices in corridor heard saying: "What a man," "So clever!" "A real military leader!" Mestnyi's voice: "The savior of our town!"*)

MIRON (*shutting door*): Phew! They're gone at last.

GORLOV: They're a fine bunch. Aren't they? (*Silence.*) What are you thinking about?

MIRON: My God! I'm wondering when the time will come when fools, ignoramuses, yes-men, simpletons, bootlickers will vanish from our soil. . . .

GORLOV: You're off again. Well, go on thinking, if you like. As they say, the turkey got to thinking too, and it croaked. (*Bursts into laughter. Exit to adjoining room.*)

MIRON: That's right. It's too late to think. We must smash them, these conceited ignoramuses, beat them till they bleed, beat them to pulp, and replace them as soon as possible with new young talented people. If we don't, our great cause is in danger.

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

Ognev's headquarters. Large room. Traces of great disorder still evident. In corner a pile of torn books. ADJUTANT at table near phone. Looks out of window. Enter KOLOS.

KOLOS: It's snowing again.

ADJUTANT: It's about time it stopped.

KOLOS: So as to allow my horses to be bombed from the air!?!
You beast!

ADJUTANT: I'm sorry, Comrade Major-General.

KOLOS: Where is the Commander?

ADJUTANT: Out there, in the square.

KOLOS (*looking out of window*): What's that crowd out there?

ADJUTANT: They've just brought the dead. They'll be burying them in a short while.

KOLOS: Red Army men?

ADJUTANT: Townspeople, shot by the Germans. The Commander is searching among the corpses for his father.

KOLOS: The old man had stayed on. Hadn't he?

ADJUTANT: This is the room he lived in.

KOLOS (*picking up books and looking at them*): All on geography.

ADJUTANT: He was a teacher. The day before yesterday the Germans shot sixty people just outside town. They must have tortured them very much. Many of the faces are distorted by bayonet gashes. He was in that group, too. The townspeople saw him led away. They say he walked in front, barefoot and hatless. They all sang.

KOLOS: They did?

ADJUTANT: The Commander will tell you about it. They took everybody's shoes.

KOLOS: We'll take the hide off those Germans. (*Enter OGNEV. Sits down at table silently. Rests head in hands.*)

OGNEV: Grigorii . . . Grigorii. . . .

KOLOS: Yes, Volodia . . .

OGNEV: I didn't recognize him . . . didn't recognize my own father. They tortured them all. Beasts! They tortured them so. . . . It's terrible to look at them. Pierced with bullets, cut by whips, eyes gouged out. They're lying out there now. But not so long ago they walked and sang, "March bravely, comrades. Keep in step." They sang . . . and for that, those beasts . . .

KOLOS: Come now, Volodia, you must be calm. What can you do?

OGNEV: He always used to sit at this window. Late into the night. A little old man in spectacles, coughing a bit, he would sit correcting his pupils' notebooks. . . . For forty years he taught children geography. . . . All those years he dreamed of making a trip to the Pamirs. I promised it to him. . . . He used to say to everybody, "The Germans will advance no further. My son is near here. He won't let them into his home town, into the house where he was born." He was waiting for me, the dear old man. . . . You didn't know what a hard time your son was having. You didn't believe. . . . You had the right not to believe . . . you expected something different from me. . . . (*Sounds of funeral march heard from square. OGNEV rises. Looks out of window. KOLOS rises too.*) They're burying them . . . Farewell . . . they'll get to know you, old teacher; they'll know you through your son. Here at your grave I take this oath: I will avenge your death. My vengeance will be heard even down in your grave. Then you will forgive me, you dear, kind old man . . .

KOLOS: Volodia . . . (*Embraces him, presses him to his bosom. Sounds of funeral march grow louder. Farewell shots are heard. Enter ADJUTANT.*)

ADJUTANT: Comrade Commander, a Major from Front Headquarters has just arrived.

KOLOS: Ask him to wait a little while.

OGNEV: No, don't. Ask him to come in. (*Sits down at table. Exit ADJUTANT. Enter MAJOR.*)

MAJOR: Major Gusakov of Front Headquarters.

OGNEV: Be seated. What has brought you here?

MAJOR: A message for you, Comrade Commander. (*Hands envelope to OGNEV. OGNEV opens it and reads.*)

KOLOS: Are you frozen?

MAJOR: I had it pretty hot.

OGNEV: Many thanks to the Chief of Front Headquarters for this warning, but I spoke about this even before the beginning of operations. (*Hands message to KOLOS. KOLOS reads.*)

KOLOS: We warned him but he wouldn't believe us. And now with hindsight he is trying to shift responsibility. It's a good thing he's finally come around.

OGNEV: Better tell me whether communications have been established with the Tank Corps.

MAJOR: I think not. But I'm not sure.

OGNEV: Where was the Tank Corps yesterday?

MAJOR: I don't know.

OGNEV: Why is our neighbor, General Orlov, sleeping? The Germans have already begun to shell our corridor.

MAJOR: I know from bitter experience that the shelling has begun. I can't tell you why your neighbor is sleeping.

OGNEV: Then why the Hell did you come, Comrade I-don't-know. Are you a staff officer or an errand boy?

MAJOR: My business is to deliver my message and be off—

OGNEV (*interrupting*): Deliver and the devil with you. Feed us up quickly; fill up our tank, we're in a hurry to get back. Is that it?

MAJOR: I've got something very unpleasant to tell you. I was just barely able to push through to you. Your narrow corridor no longer exists. I was shot at by mine-throwers, and almost killed. I can't understand what you're thinking about. You're cut off. You're encircled.

OGNEV: What!

MAJOR: Yes, yes—it's a fact.

OGNEV: Up with you. (*MAJOR rises. OGNEV looks at him scornfully.*) Go over to that house opposite. Tell my Commandant that I have ordered your arrest.

MAJOR: I represent Front Headquarters.

OGNEV: Silence! Carry out your orders.

MAJOR: I obey, Comrade Commander. (*Exit.*)

KOLOS: I thought you'd sock him. There's a coward for you.

OGNEV: It's a pity he's from Front Headquarters. Otherwise I'd knock the word "encircled" out of him forever. (*Enter CAPTAIN, Chief of Communications.*)

CAPTAIN: Comrade Commander, a code message.

OGNEV (*taking it, reading it, and handing it to KOLOS*): How are communications?

CAPTAIN: The explosions of the shells interfere and the Germans have raised a hell of a noise in the air but we're holding on.

OGNEV (*to KOLOS*): How do you like that?

KOLOS: I don't understand anything.

CAPTAIN: May I go?

OGNEV: You may. (*Exit CAPTAIN.*)

KOLOS: Either the Commander of the Front does not understand or he does not want to understand anything. Dig in and wait. Wait for what?

OGNEV: For the Germans to concentrate all their forces here. And then he'll say, "What's the matter with you, my dear fellows? You've got yourselves into a pretty mess. Didn't I knock any sense into your heads? What were you thinking about? What shall I do with you? Order your heads removed?"

KOLOS: That's what he'll do. Without fail. I wish the devil would take him. The old bull. How does he get that way?

OGNEV: All limited people are like that. Once they achieve power they get stuck on themselves and love to "lecture" and scold. And they must always "knock things into your head." (*Telephone rings. OGNEV picks up receiver.*) Yes . . . and where are you? Come over.

KOLOS: Who was that?

OGNEV: Orlik, Chief of our Political Division. He's a devil. Yesterday he got off lucky with a wound in his arm. A shell fragment hit him. He always gets into the very thick of things.

KOLOS: And I thought he was a philosopher.

OGNEV: He's well-educated. He used to be a political instructor. Speaks two languages. I call him professor.

KOLOS: Is he a strong character?

OGNEV: Don't be fooled by the fact that he's thin and wears glasses. He can break anybody's bones.

KOLOS: My Commissar, Onufry Stratagov, is a giant of a fellow. I had difficulty finding a horse that could carry him. But I can't boast about his education. True, he's an excellent horseman. He loves his horse.

OGNEV (*laughing*): His name alone is worth something, Onufry Stratagov. Where'd you find him?

KOLOS: He was sent to me. I call him Onufry, the Hoof. It suits him better.

OGNEV: Doesn't he get offended?

KOLOS: No, he understands. (*Enter ORLIK, his arm bandaged.*)

OGNEV: I've got a bone to pick with you. Why did you go into battle with the Third Battalion? A chief of the army's political division shouldn't be so reckless as to rush straight into . . .

ORLIK: I got word from the Division that enemy agents had appeared in the Third Battalion and spread unhealthy rumors.

OGNEV: Who was spreading these rumors? Did you find out?

ORLIK: Yes. The political instructor there is a very vigilant comrade, supervigilant. He uncovered everything and immediately sent a report in to the commanding staff. By the time it reached me, it was quite a business. There were two men involved. And, believe it or not, both had been awarded Orders.

OGNEV: What rumors were they spreading?

ORLIK: Very dangerous ones. (*Laughs.*) Imagine, they were saying that the Commander of the Battalion was a real aristocrat, and the Political Instructor, too. That they'd got themselves a chef and were gorging themselves on enough food for five men, while the Red Army kitchen wasn't worth a tinker's damn. The Red Army men beat up the cook because he cooked nothing but slops for them. (*OGNEV notes this down.*) Don't write anything. I raised such a row in the Battalion that both the Commander and the Political Instructor will remember it for a long time.

OGNEV: What rats! You draft the order and I'll sign it. State the

facts concisely but vividly. And add that I forbid all commanders to sit down to eat before all the Red Army men have been served.

ORLIK: Very good. I'll get it drafted today.

KOLOS: Now I'd like to hear how it was you got into the battle—how you got your arm scratched.

ORLIK (*laughing*): The Germans learned I was carrying on such an important discussion they opened their attack.

KOLOS: And?

ORLIK: Well, I couldn't tell the Red Army men to go and fight for awhile and we'd carry on our discussion when they finished.

KOLOS: So you went into the battle shouting—"For the fatherland, hurrah!"

ORLIK: Not I! The Commander has a voice like a trumpet. I joined the mine-throwers. I'm thankful they allowed me to shoot. My mines didn't land so badly, but the battery Commander lost patience and cursed me, because I took a long time getting my aim. So I quit and turned over my place to someone who knew how.

OGNEV: Good for you. (*Coughs.*)

ORLIK: Well, I really didn't mind. The Commander was right. Any answer from the Commander of the Front?

OGNEV (*walking over to the door and addressing ADJUTANT*): Tell the Chief of Staff to come here.

ADJUTANT (*offstage*): Yes, Comrade Commander.

OGNEV: Here, read this. (*Gives ORLIK paper to read. ORLIK reads.*)

KOLOS: Do you understand what it's all about?

ORLIK: The Tank Corps is probably on its way to us.

OGNEV: Forget about the Tank Corps. The Front is looking for it but can't find it.

ORLIK: Why?

KOLOS: Don't you know what our communications are like? I was buried twice. They announced I'd been killed.

ORLIK: It's partly your fault.

KOLOS: What do you mean? One of my radio stations was bombed and the other was out of order. I should have had twenty-two, not two stations.

ORLIK: And how many have you now?

KOLOS: Enough now. I got Khripun by the throat and he found us some more. Everything's that way here. They won't give you anything even though the warehouses are bursting with materials. They all wait till you take them by the throat. The harder you squeeze, the more they respect you. And they give you what you want. Just like the merchants used to be. You could be dying under their very eyes and they wouldn't even look at you. But just pull them by the beard and at once they open their purses, bow to you, and even thank you. (*Enter CHIEF OF STAFF and COLONEL SVECHKA, Guards Division Commander.*)

CHIEF OF STAFF: I've brought along Comrade Svechka. The situation is getting worse and worse. Divisional Commander, make your report.

OGNEV: Have the skiers returned?

SVECHKA: They have, Comrade Commander. They have carried out your assignment.

OGNEV: Good for them. They made good time. Make your report.

SVECHKA (*taking out map*): Right here is the Communard State Farm. It's . . .

OGNEV: Fifty-three kilometers away.

SVECHKA: They discovered a tank concentration. They counted 150.

OGNEV: Just a minute. (*Makes a note on his map.*) Go on.

SVECHKA: This morning an S.S. division and 200 tanks arrived in the village of Sinitsyno, to the east of the Communard State Farm. There's another column of about two regiments moving in the same direction. The guerrillas told the scouts all this. Two of the guerrillas are here.

CHIEF OF STAFF: I talked to them.

OGNEV: Is it a big detachment?

CHIEF OF STAFF: There are fifty of them.

OGNEV: Are they local people?

CHIEF OF STAFF: They are.

OGNEV: Do they know the roads?

CHIEF OF STAFF: Very well. They gave us valuable information. It

seems the Germans have laid a new road from the river to Kolokol. (*Points it out on his map.*) Here it is. They forced the people to work on it day and night. More than three thousand people lost their lives on this road. Some died of frost; others were shot.

OGNEV: It's thirty kilometers away.

CHIEF OF STAFF: That's right. They've built strong bridges but there's no traffic across them. Probably so as to avoid our scouting planes discovering them.

OGNEV: That's interesting. Go on.

SVECHKA: I have finished, Comrade Commander. Our scouts found the enemy here at 11:20 A.M. and in the Communard State Farm at noon. That is all.

CHIEF OF STAFF: Divisional Commander Iskovenko has just reported that our scouts have discovered the movements of the enemy from Kolokol toward our corridor.

OGNEV: How many?

CHIEF OF STAFF: One division and about seventy tanks.

OGNEV: Where were they discovered?

CHIEF OF STAFF: Here. (*Shows point on map.*) At 3:40 P.M.

OGNEV: And now it's 4 P.M.

CHIEF OF STAFF: That's right. There you are; I have finished.

OGNEV (*to SVECHKA*): And how are things going in your "back yard"?

SVECHKA: Kind of quiet. The enemy is very weak. If you give the order, I'll move up to the very banks of the river.

OGNEV: No, my fine fellow. That's exactly what they want. As it is, you've broken away from us. The tanks may drop in on you tonight and your position is no damn good. I order you to return here immediately. We must concentrate all of our forces in one knot, now. Cover your withdrawal thoroughly with artillery and aviation so that your tail won't get hurt. At 7 P.M. report on how the order has been carried out. Get going.

SVECHKA: Yes, Comrade Commander. But it's difficult to shift a whole division in three hours. Consider the distance. It's about . . .

OGNEV (*interrupting*): Don't count the kilometers. We're counting

in seconds now. You'll report at 6:30 P.M., not at 7 P.M. And if you stay here any longer, I'll make it—

SVECHKA: I shall report at 6:30 P.M. (*Runs out of room.*)

OGNEV (*looking at map, measuring with compass, and making notes*): That's good. I recognize your tricks, you dirty German dogs.

CHIEF OF STAFF: Pretty sly planning.

OGNEV: On whose part?

CHIEF OF STAFF: The German Command. Look at their moves. Very foxy.

OGNEV: What's foxy about it? It's child's play and not foxiness. If the German Command had made a mistake similar to that made by our Commander of the Front, I'd have destroyed three times the manpower they did the day before yesterday. They haven't thought up anything particularly sly. On the contrary, they're not taking the proper advantage of our stupidity. What's Gorlov's strategy worth now? The Tank Corps is bogged down somewhere along these old roads. And the Germans have built a new one, none of us knew anything about. He said they had no tanks. But they do and they're moving right on us together with their infantry. They have blocked off our corridor with muck, taking advantage of the fact that Gorlov is asleep. They're probably rehearsing for tomorrow morning: "Russ! Surrender. You're surrounded." But we'll have an answer for them. (*Looks at map. Pause. Quotes from Ukrainian folk song.*) "Don't walk under my window. Keep your charms to yourself." To Hell with you!

KOLOS: It won't be as easy as that.

OGNEV: But that's just what we'll tell them. (*Makes notes on map. Writes.*) Correct, Orlik?

ORLIK: We must, Comrade Commander. Absolutely.

OGNEV: I love you, Comrade Professor, for your healthy and rational optimism. Look here, friends. They moved their garrison out of Kolokol, thinking they would trap us. They've sent some of their tanks against us; some of their tanks are fighting our Tank Corps somewhere along the roads. Now, as that nice old man, Suvorov, used to say, it's up to our feet. We must move fast, make our jumps where the Germans least expect us. We will leave two regiments, all

the cannon, all the heavy guns, four cavalry squadrons to fool them—in town. Welcome, Germans, welcome. The army awaits your pincers. We will ask you and your Guardsmen, Professor, to hold on at this cozy hillock for a whole day. As for the rest, as soon as it gets dark, they and their horses will get into this new road and make a lightning run for Kolokol's back gates. When we take it, they'll have to turn their tanks back but it will be too late. The stores of benzine, communication, and supplies of all kinds will be in our hands and we'll be waiting to bayonet them in their own fortifications. Please look this plan over and give me your criticism. (*Pause.*) Well, what's wrong, old man?

KOLOS (*looking at map*): Comrade Commander, it's a risky business. We'd better think it over.

OGNEV: Two squadrons of reckless sabres will head our columns. The sentries will be noiselessly removed. To meet all the rules of etiquette we'll disguise our vanguard in German uniforms. Luckily we've captured a lot of prisoners.

ORLIK: For our men to disguise themselves as Germans is beneath us. That's what the Germans do. They dress up like Red Army men. It's a dishonest trick.

OGNEV: I think we're foolish to fight honestly with the most dishonest of all enemies. Suvorov taught us military cunning, but some of our self-made military men have forgotten all about it. You must answer cunning with cunning.

KOLOS (*turning away from map to CHIEF OF STAFF*): What do you think?

CHIEF OF STAFF: There's no other way out.

OGNEV: Drop such talk! I'm not suggesting this operation because there's no other way out.

CHIEF OF STAFF: I didn't express my thoughts correctly. It's the best we can do under the circumstances.

KOLOS: If they guessed our move, it would be a risky business.

OGNEV: That's why we must tell no one where we're going. Our worst enemy now is the spy or the blabbermouth. And you've got them wherever you turn, even in our army.

KOLOS: That can't be!

OGNEV: Of course there are! Absolutely! The Germans are very crafty about such things.

CHIEF OF STAFF: We'll have to ask for the approval of the Commander of the Front by code.

OGNEV: We won't.

KOLOS: Why not?

OGNEV: He'll start "explaining" things to us and we'll lose time.

ORLIK: It just isn't right to do things that way, Comrade Commander.

OGNEV: I know, but I'll be going crazy soon from those "rights." This is the end. Gorlov got us into this mess; let's get ourselves out of it with honor. It will be better for him, too. Comrade Chief of Staff, take this order down: first . . . (*Enter CAPTAIN, Chief of Communications.*)

CAPTAIN: A code message from the Commander of the Front.

(*OGNEV reads message, throws it on table, crushes pencil in his hand. Broken pencil falls to table. ORLIK comes over. Reads silently. OGNEV walks away from table nervously. Stands at door. Looks intently at KOLOS.*)

OGNEV (*shouting*): Well, what do you say now? (*KOLOS is silent.*) What do you say? (*Pause.*) Speak up. (*Tears code out of hands of CHIEF OF STAFF.*) I ask you, what is this?

KOLOS: A suggestion from the Commander of the Front to withdraw immediately to our initial position. True, he asks whether you have any objections. But that's just a formality. Within the hour the suggestion will become an order.

OGNEV: That isn't what I'm asking you about. I know how to read.

KOLOS: An order is an order. We shall have to push our way back.

OGNEV: Of course. But first of all this is a suggestion, not an order. Second, it is basically incorrect and it is disastrous. Push back? Why? Where's the Tank Corps? He says it's a bit knocked out and can't help us. That isn't true. The Tank Corps has been smashed. And now it's my army that's to be knocked out.

KOLOS: We'll be able to push through.

CHIEF OF STAFF: The Commander of the Front wanting to correct the situation has decided that the best way out is to retreat.

OGNEV: The Hell with him and what he wants or doesn't want. The crows are gathering around. He sent us ahead. It didn't work. Now he orders us back, at no matter what cost. Are there no other ways out? It was by the blood of our fighting men that we broke through the German defenses, not just so that we could turn back. My army will live, fight, and be victorious. It can and it will. (*Enter CAPTAIN.*)

CAPTAIN: A code message from Moscow, from Gaidar, the Military Council member. (*Hands it over.*)

OGNEV (*reading and becoming transformed with happiness*): This is really something. I guess there is justice on this earth. Moscow gives us permission to act according to our plan that is counter to the plan of the Commander of the Front.

KOLOS: Well, I'll be . . .

OGNEV: Yes, you'll be . . . I asked Comrade Gaidar to report our plan along with the Commander's plan to the proper authorities in Moscow. Now, Gaidar informs me that Moscow has okayed our plan and has already informed the Commander of the Front.

KOLOS (*joyfully*): That's really splendid. Now, let us get into action and make it so hot for the Germans even the skies will feel the heat.

OGNEV: That's talking, old man.

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE TWO

A trench by the road. Near-by, to the right, are seen a village, white treetops, an occasional farm cottage, but more often black ruins with chimneys pointing skyward. On the road, near the trench, is a German language signboard on a pole. Firing of guns and the rattle of machine

guns is heard from a distant point beyond the village. Sergeant OSTAPENKO, Sergeant BASHLYKOV, and Junior Sergeants SHAIAMETOV and GOMELAURI are sitting in the trench. Antitank rifles lying along the side of the trench.

GOMELAURI: Boy! What a cold day! Is it 35 below zero?

OSTAPENKO: Maybe it is.

SHAIAMETOV: The frost isn't so bad. It's the draft that's so bad. It's blowing like it does on our Kazakh steppes.

BASHLYKOV: You should see the frosts we have in Siberia.

OSTAPENKO: And in Poltava we have the best dumplings.

BASHLYKOV: You keep out of this, Ostapenko.

OSTAPENKO: And you quit boasting about your Siberian frosts. You freeze right through your guts here. GomelaURI, tell us what it's like in your Georgia, now.

GOMELAURI: Don't remind me of it. (*Listens to cannonade.*) Things are happening over there. Why are we just sitting?

SHAIAMETOV: Those are our orders. The Commander knows what we have to do.

OSTAPENKO: Listen guys, can you explain why the papers say that winter helps us? that, the more severe the frost, the worse it is for the Germans?

GOMELAURI: What they say is right.

OSTAPENKO: What's right about it? Fritz gets into a hut. Cuts himself out a hole and sprays us with bullets while we creep along in the snow.

BASHLYKOV: But when we shove him out of the village, he freezes.

OSTAPENKO: Freezes, my eye! We get him out of one village and he runs to the next. Guys on the run always have it hot.

GOMELAURI: But didn't you notice how lousy they are? I can't bear to look at them. It makes you want to puke. There are hundreds of lice on each one of those Germans.

OSTAPENKO: That's not from frost.

GOMELAURI: From what else, then?

OSTAPENKO: From sadness.

BASHLYKOV: What are you talking about?

SHAIAMETOV: I don't get it.

OSTAPENKO: There used to be a kulak in our village. He was a powerful figure of a man. His name was Makogonenko. He was always clean. He used to walk belly-first. He had a black beard. He used to brush it till it shone like silk in the sun. And when he heard that collectivization was on the way and that he would be done for, he became blue. I ran into him. I looked at him. He had gone completely white. I said to him, "Uncle Makogonenko, how come your beard has gone completely white?" And he answered, "That, my fine fellow, is from the little biting insects that have got into my beard." "Why don't you get rid of them?" And he said, "Let them live. My heart has grown sad, so sad I shall die soon." It's the same with the Fritzie. They wanted to beat us by autumn. It didn't work out. The rains set in. Fritz got stuck in the mud. And the blues got him. Then winter came and the blues set in even worse. Now he walks around like that kulak, Makogonenko, and he's even stopped fighting the lice because he knows he's really done for. You see, it all comes from despair.

BASHLYKOV: Take your positions. (*All lie down in their positions. Noise of car heard. Enter COLONEL SVECHKA, Commander of the Division, and MAJOR IASNYI, Commander of the Regiment.*)

IASNYI: A machine-gun platoon has been added to our battery. Everyone has been well-supplied with hand grenades.

SVECHKA: That's good.

IASNYI: Comrade Commander of the Division, I cannot understand why we are retreating.

SVECHKA: We had pushed too far out. The Commander has decided to concentrate us all in one bunch.

IASNYI: I see. (*Shouts.*) Gorlov.

SERGEI GORLOV (*offstage*): Yes, Comrade Commander. (*Enters.*) Commander of the Battery, Guards Lieutenant Gorlov.

SVECHKA: How are you? (*Shakes hands.*) Have you seen your father?

SERGEI: I have, Comrade Commander. He asked to be remembered to you.

SVECHKA: Thanks! How does the Lieutenant-General look? Does he look well?

SERGEI: He does. He asked me to tell you that he would be coming to see his old friend, Guards Colonel Svechka, soon.

SVECHKA: It's nice of him not to forget. But as for coming here—our roads aren't so hot now. (*Laughs.*) Gorlov, your battery will remain here. I must warn you not to let a single tank, not even a mouse, creep through here. Understand?

SERGEI: I do, Comrade Commander.

SVECHKA: No matter what happens, you are to remain here until further orders. Even if . . .

SERGEI: Your orders will be carried out.

SVECHKA: Guards Lieutenant Gorlov, I wish you luck.

SERGEI: Thank you, Comrade Guards Colonel. (*Exit SVECHKA.*)

IASNYI (*quietly*): Serezha . . .

SERGEI: Don't worry, Petr Petrovich. They're waiting for you. (*Exit IASNYI. SERGEI walks over to trench.*) Well, how are you, my apostles? Is it hot?

OSTAPENKO: It is, Comrade Guards Lieutenant. We've been in a sweat. We've gone thirsty with the heat.

SERGEI: You've been thirsty all your life, Ostapenko.

OSTAPENKO: But it's never been like today. Help me out, and I'll remember you all my life.

SERGEI: What a guy! (*Pulls out flask.*) Here—only share it with the rest.

OSTAPENKO: Thank you. (*Takes a tumbler out of pocket and fills it.*) Your health.

SERGEI: Pour it down! Pour it down!

OSTAPENKO (*drinking*): Just like tea.

SERGEI: You devil! It's pure alcohol.

OSTAPENKO: No! We'll check that in a minute. (*Pours.*)

GOMELAURI: Hold on there! (*Takes away tumbler.*) I'll do the testing.

OSTAPENKO: What do you know about those things? You're used to drinking that sour stuff.

GOMELAURI: Don't worry about me. (*Raises tumbler.*) Here in the snow, in this trench, I raise this little tumbler with deep feeling—to our reunion after the war in my sunny Kakhitia. My mother, Veriko, my father, Besso, and my wife, Tamara—will greet you as if you were their own flesh and blood. To our reunion! (*He drinks.*)

OSTAPENKO: But first come to the Ukraine and visit us in Poltava. Of course, we might find that my mother, my father, my wife Oksana, and my son have already been killed by the Germans. (*Pause.*) Well, what can one do. I'll play host myself.

SHAIAMETOV: That's all right, Ostapenko. I'll come visit you. I'll make pilau for you myself. What a pilau I make! Then you'll come visit with us in Kazakhstan . . .

SERGEI: Well, how about returning my flask. (*Takes it.*) You've cleaned me out.

BASHLYKOV: That's how we Guards do things.

SERGEI: Now, my apostles, see to it that not one German bastard passes this road.

OSTAPENKO: You don't have to warn us, Comrade Commander.

SERGEI: All right, you see to it. Gomelaury, don't you dare go out again without your felt boots on . . . I saw you running around bare-foot in the snow, yesterday.

GOMELAURI: You must excuse me, Comrade Commander. I just couldn't hold myself back. My heart's on edge. This is what happened. We hit a tank. The tank commander began to run away. We'd run out of bullets. I got so mad! I asked the Senior Sergeant for permission to catch him. And Ostapenko came out with: "You'll never catch him." Of course my heart couldn't stand it. I can't even remember myself when my hands pulled off my valenki. But there I was running like the wind. I jumped on the German. We fell into the snow. He bit my ear. I grabbed him by the throat. I shouted, "You won't escape!" And choked him to death.

SERGEI: Good for you! But you have no right to leave Ostapenko. You might run after one man and miss out on a tank.

OSTAPENKO: Don't you worry. From now on I'll tie this devil up to me.

SERGEI: If things are quiet tonight, come by. We'll have tea together.

ALL: Thanks, Comrade Commander. (*Exit SERGEI. Long pause.*)

GOMELAURI: What are you thinking so hard about, Ostapenko?

BASHLYKOV: Don't bother him.

SHAIAMETOV (*quietly*): You're thinking about Oksana, aren't you? Tell us.

OSTAPENKO: Yes. Read us your letter, GomelaURI.

GOMELAURI: Which one?

OSTAPENKO: The last one. The one you got New Year's Eve.

GOMELAURI: I've already read it to you.

OSTAPENKO: Read it again. Nobody writes me. I'll listen to yours. It'll make me feel better.

SHAIAMETOV: Read it. I haven't had any letters either. Bashlykov, you keep your eye on the road and we'll listen. Have you had any mail?

BASHLYKOV: Just two letters, for all this time. (*Steps away. Watches road.*)

OSTAPENKO: Come on.

GOMELAURI (*taking out letter and reading quickly*): "My dear beloved Akaki, I kiss you and inform you . . ."

OSTAPENKO: Don't rush it. Start over again.

SHAIAMETOV: Read slowly. Don't race along. Take your time.

GOMELAURI (*slowly*): "My dear beloved Akaki . . ."

SHAIAMETOV: Beloved. . . .

GOMELAURI: "I kiss you and inform you that father and mother are feeling fine and send their regards, and your son, Goga . . ."

OSTAPENKO: Your son. . . . (*Leans his head on his hands.*)

GOMELAURI: ". . . keeps saying now, 'Papa, Papa, bang, bang.' There's plenty of work on the collective farm. We can just barely manage it all. Why haven't you written a single letter? Every night I cry quietly. . . ."

OSTAPENKO: Every night. . . .

GOMELAURI: ". . . Perhaps you have been seriously wounded. I must also tell you our brigade leader turned out to be a bad man. As

soon as you all left for the front, he immediately turned scoundrel. He drinks with the bookkeeper. They're both rascals. We wrote the newspaper about it. The bookkeeper has already been arrested. But the brigade leader got out of it." . . . He won't get away with it. After the war, I'll choke him to death.

OSTAPENKO: Go on with your reading.

GOMELAURI: "I want so much to see you. I dream of you every night. Once I saw you with a beard in my dreams. Aunt Nina says it means sickness. I was so frightened! So you won't catch cold in the winter, I'm knitting you two pairs of woolen stockings. I'll be sending them off on September 25." They should arrive in five days. I'll give you one pair, Ostapenko.

OSTAPENKO: Why in five days?

GOMELAURI: She wrote this letter September 1. I got it January 1. On September 25 she mailed the package. Today is January 20. As I figure it I'll get it in five days.

SHAIAMETOV: Read!

GOMELAURI: "Give all your friends regards from father, mother, and me. We ask you to crush the Fascists as fast as you can and come to visit us. We shall have ten barrels of wine and Aunt Nina will have five. Kisses from Goga, Papa, Mama, Aunt Nina, me and the whole collective farm. Yours, Tamara. This was written September 1, 1941."

SHAIAMETOV: If only I'd get such a letter! I don't know what I would do.

OSTAPENKO: You said it.

GOMELAURI: How many letters I wrote her! And she didn't get one of them. A letter is small. It doesn't weigh much. Still it never gets there.

OSTAPENKO: That's because there are lots of bureaucrats in the post office.

SHAIAMETOV: Let's write to Stalin: "Why haven't I received one letter from my wife?"

GOMELAURI: Why bother Stalin with such things? He's got enough to worry about.

SHAIAMETOV: Then let's write to Molotov.

OSTAPENKO: And do you think Molotov has nothing else to worry about? He has so much to keep him busy now—with all the different nations. We have so many friends now—England and America and Poland—at least twenty of them. He's got enough to do just handling our friends. We've got agreements with every one of them. Agreements that need looking after. He's got to try to put sense in their heads—to get them to attack Hitler as soon as possible. It's enough to give you consumption.

SHAIAMETOV: Then who can we write to?

GOMELAURI: To Kalinin.

OSTAPENKO: We can't. He's sick. He's getting quite ill from handing out Orders.

SHAIAMETOV: How come?

OSTAPENKO: There are rumors in Moscow that since he has to make awards every day—two hundred to three hundred people at once sometimes—and they all shake his hand—some pretty firmly, from happiness—he's got sick. His hand has swelled up. It's worse than hard labor in exile used to be.

SHAIAMETOV: Who are we going to write, then?

GOMELAURI: Let's write a collective letter to the Chief Postmaster. Let's say: "Where are your eyes? You've got bureaucrats in your office. We ask you . . ."

OSTAPENKO: No, not that way. So that he gets the point, first we must let him have it and then show him our reasons and then let him have it again. And we ought to end the letter like this: "Tell your bureaucrats that our day in the trenches is just as long as yours. Regards. Kiss the bureaucrats you know where. . . ." So that it's polite and clear. (*All laugh. Two Red Army men enter, stretching a wire, setting up a telephone in the trench.*)

BASHLYKOV: Say, fellows. Is the lieutenant coming here?

FIRST RED ARMY MAN: Yes.

BASHLYKOV: Is the battery the same place it was?

SECOND RED ARMY MAN: He ordered it moved to an open position. There they are pulling it out.

OSTAPENKO: That's the kind of a guy he is. He doesn't like to shoot from behind corners. Have you seen the field kitchen?

FIRST RED ARMY MAN: No, they've all moved away.

BASHLYKOV: How long ago?

FIRST RED ARMY MAN: Just a little while ago. We were the only ones left behind.

GOMELAURI: Where'd they go to?

FIRST RED ARMY MAN (*pointing*): That way.

BASHLYKOV: That means back.

FIRST RED ARMY MAN: That's right. And they left us behind. Oh, brothers! They left us to sure death.

OSTAPENKO: Gomelaury, give him a sock in the jaw.

GOMELAURI: You'd better do it. You've got a heavier hand.

OSTAPENKO: Attention!

FIRST RED ARMY MAN: What are you going to do? (OSTAPENKO *grabs him by throat and gives him a sock*. Enter LIEUTENANT SERGEI GORLOV.)

SERGEI: What's this all about?

FIRST RED ARMY MAN: He hit me.

GOMELAURI: He's a coward. He says we were left here to a sure death.

SERGEI: You shouldn't hit him. Explain things. Make things clear. (To RED ARMY MAN.) What's your name?

FIRST RED ARMY MAN: Pechenka, Stepan.

OSTAPENKO: It's my fault, Comrade Commander. Come along, pal. I'll explain things to you. Come on. (*Exit OSTAPENKO and PECHENKA.*)

SERGEI (*picking up receiver*): Chekalenko . . . Chekalenko . . . how are things? Are you saving on snow? I can see a black spot from here. (*Makes another call.*) Petrov . . . Petrov. Do you see a tree to the left of the hillock? . . . Well, that's fine. Yes, you can. (*Puts down receiver.*)

PECHENKA (*offstage*): Ouch! Ouch! I understand. Ouch! It's clear.

SERGEI: What's happening there? What's he doing?

GOMELAURI: Ostapenko is explaining about current events. Don't

worry, Comrade Commander. (*Enter OSTAPENKO followed by PECHENKA.*)

OSTAPENKO: Comrade Commander, we've had a heart-to-heart talk, and now he understands everything. He's a fine fellow. He just made a slip.

SERGEI: Well, then tell us why we were left here.

PECHENKA: If the Fascists come up, we must smash them in real Guards manner.

OSTAPENKO: See? He's a regular fellow.

SERGEI: You don't think they've left us here to die?

PECHENKA: Absolutely not! He who fights cannot perish.

OSTAPENKO: You see! He'll be a Guardsman yet.

SERGEI: We'll see. At ease. (*Picks up receiver.*) Chekalenko! Chekalenko! A little more snow. Yes, yes. . . . (*PECHENKA sits down. OSTAPENKO walks over to him. Takes out tobacco pouch.*)

OSTAPENKO: Take some tobacco for a smoke. Go on, take some. (*PECHENKA takes some.*) It's only frightening in the beginning. Then you get used to it. Are you hungry?

PECHENKA: Yes, I am.

OSTAPENKO: Here. (*Gives him a package.*) Here's some sausage. Don't be angry with me, pal. I've nothing against you. I did it all so that you'd get the idea, as a sort of lesson. Boy! How my father used to beat me up. Not like this! And I'm grateful to him.

PECHENKA: You're not angry with me, are you?

OSTAPENKO: As long as you recognize your mistake, I'm not angry.

PECHENKA: Let's shake hands on that.

OSTAPENKO (*thinking*): Well, and now I feel better, too. Do you think it's very easy for me when I don't know whether I've got a friend or a bastard next to me in the trench? Down here, pal, it's important always to know where you stand. . . . You're young. Remember that. Always keep your eyes open. Understand?

PECHENKA: Yes, I understand.

SERGEI (*looking through field glasses*): Send word to the battery that to the right of the windmill I see enemy tanks, but tell them not to open fire on them until they're ordered.

SECOND RED ARMY MAN: Yes, Comrade Commander. (*Picks up receiver. Delivers message. Everyone takes his position.*)

SERGEI: Well, apostles, here's your chance to perform a miracle. Ostapenko!

OSTAPENKO: Here!

SERGEI: Crawl out to the left of the road, to the telegraph pole.

OSTAPENKO: Yes, Comrade Commander. Gomelauri, forward! (*They crawl out.*)

SERGEI (*looking through field glasses*): Send word to the machine-gun platoon that infantrymen are riding in on top of the tanks.

SECOND RED ARMY MAN: Yes, Comrade Commander. (*Delivers message over the telephone.*)

SERGEI (*observing*): Oh, boy! Gee whiz!

BASHLYKOV: Are there many of them?

SERGEI: Enough.

SHAIAMETOV: Now I see them too. One, two, three . . .

BASHLYKOV: How many?

SHAIAMETOV (*counting*): Thirty-five, thirty-six . . .

SERGEI: Bashlykov!

BASHLYKOV: Here!

SERGEI: Crawl straight ahead 100 meters, quickly.

BASHLYKOV: Yes, Comrade Commander. Shaiametov, forward! (*They crawl out. PECHENKA is preparing hand grenades. He lays them down next to himself, and keeps pulling grenades out of bag.*)

SERGEI: That's it. (*Smiles.*) You brought a whole warehouse along.

PECHENKA: To be ready for any emergency.

SERGEI: Keep your eyes peeled, Pechenka. Look not only ahead but all around you.

PECHENKA: Yes, Comrade Commander. I already see someone crawling towards us.

SERGEI: It's a nurse. Hurry up! (*Looks through field glasses again.*)

PECHENKA: Hurry up, nurse. Come on! She's pulling along a sled. (*Nurse crawls into trench with sled.*)

NURSE: Oh, boy! Am I hot!

SERGEI: Marusia, why did you crawl over? Who's left at the battery?

MARUSIA: Katia is there and I'll stay here. Something may happen all of a sudden.

SERGEI (*picking up receiver*): Petrenko . . . Petrenko. Keep the shrapnel handy—tommy gunners on the tanks. (*Hum of motors is vaguely heard.*)

MARUSIA: Are there many of them? . . .

PECHENKA: Don't be afraid, nurse. We'll smash them.

MARUSIA: I know that myself. Comrade Guards Lieutenant Gorlov always wins. He's got some gunners! Do you know Vasia Sokol?

PECHENKA: What's he like?

MARUSIA: He's—his eyes are blue as blue can be. His eyebrows are black; they're like two wings. Boy, oh, boy! There's not another one like him among the Guards . . . I guess Katia is making up to him now. But he doesn't pay any attention to her. She's red-headed and freckle-faced. We used to work together—I as an errand-girl and she as a charwoman. We came to the front together. Have you seen her?

PECHENKA: Quiet. They're approaching.

MARUSIA: The Hell with them. They're still far away. Today Vasia said to me: "Even if a hundred tanks attack, I can manage." I kissed him, and he said: "Now, even a thousand won't scare me." Boy! Is he brave! It's somethin' terrific! Have you seen Katia? Well, you haven't missed anything. Yesterday Vasia said this about her: "You know, Marusia, Katia is not so pretty, of course, but she writes pretty letters." So I says: "Vasia, maybe she has a letter-writer." (*Hum of motor comes nearer.*)

SERGEI (*at phone*): Batteries! Meet tanks with dispersed fire at close range.

MARUSIA: The dirty rats! They're crawling up on us. Come on, Vasia; get going! (*Shell burst, rapid fire heard.*) Look! They've caught fire! One, two, three. . . . That's Vasia Sokol's work. That's him! (*Sends French kiss. Machine-gun fire from either side.*)

SERGEI (*at telephone*): Heavier fire. Don't fall asleep there, you devils. Chekalenko, at the third tank with the shrapnel. (*Noise of tanks heard close-by.*)

PECHENKA: Comrade Commander, tanks are coming in on us.

SERGEI: Back to your position. (*Into mouthpiece.*) Get at that third tank with the shrapnel. Make it lively.

PECHENKA: It's stopped. It's burning. Another one has stopped.

SERGEI: Attaboy, Ostapenko!

VOICE (*offstage*): Nurse, nurse!

MARUSIA: Yes, my own. (*Crawls out with sled.*)

ANOTHER VOICE (*offstage*): Nurse . . . nurse!

PECHENKA: They got nine tanks.

SERGEI: Eleven. (*Whirring of mines is heard.*) Marusia, get down. (*Explosion is heard near-by.*)

PECHENKA: Oh! She's been killed.

SERGEI (*looking*): No, she's still crawling.

VOICE (*offstage*): Nurse . . . nurse!

PECHENKA: I see ten tanks to the left.

SERGEI (*into mouthpiece*): To the right of road, ten tanks outflanking us. Chekalenko, direct fire at them. Speed it up. (*Firing increases.*)

PECHENKA: They're turning back. They're retreating. They're on the run.

SERGEI: They'll be right back. (*Into mouthpiece.*) Chekalenko, how are things going there? Be on your guard, they'll be starting their outflanking movement now. Turn your battery immediately . . . I'm well defended. Don't shoot in this direction. Just cover the machine-gun platoon. Speed up your hits . . . Yes . . . (*MARUSIA crawls in.*)

MARUSIA: Comrade Commander, Junior Sergeant Shaiametov and Senior Sergeant Ostapenko have been killed. Here are their papers. (*Gives them to him. SERGEI unfolds papers. A piece of paper falls out. PECHENKA picks it up.*)

PECHENKA (*reading*): "I ask to be accepted into the Party of Lenin and Stalin. If I am killed, consider I died a Communist. Death to the Fascists! Guards Senior Sergeant Ostapenko." (*A pause.*) My friend . . . my friend . . . what did you do? (*Wipes away a tear.*) And there you are—one minute, and he's dead.

SERGEI: Don't cry, brother. You don't cry about such people . . . (*Noise of motors gets louder.*)

PECHENKA (*looking in direction of noise*): I'll show you. Come on! Come! Get closer. (*Takes out hand grenade.*)

SERGEI (*picking up receiver and speaking into mouthpiece*): To left of road twenty-five tanks. To right—thirty-one. On the road—ten. Aim only left and right. Don't wait for my orders. Apostles, here's your chance to perform a miracle. For the fatherland, my eagles! Pass this message on. (*Puts down telephone.*) Pechenka, take the hand grenades and crawl out to Gomelauri. Hurry it!

PECHENKA: Yes, Comrade Commander. (*Takes hand grenades. Crawls out.*)

SERGEI (*taking out hand grenades*): Sit here, Marusia. (*To SECOND RED ARMY MAN.*) Have you any hand grenades?

SECOND RED ARMY MAN (*showing them*): Yes, Comrade Commander.

SERGEI: I'm going to join Bashlykov. Hold on, comrades. (*Crawls out.*)

MARUSIA: You dirty devils! You'll get it! Did you hear what the Commander said? For the fatherland, my eagles. He was thinking mainly of Vasia Sokol.

SECOND RED ARMY MAN: Which Vasia?

MARUSIA: You're from the reserves; you're a newcomer here. That's why you don't know. I'll tell you. Vasia's eyes are blue as blue can be. His eyebrows are like two birds. He's the best gunner in the Guards. An eagle. He's a typical eagle. Anyone would see that at a glance. (*Noise of motors increases. Gunfire is heard.*)

SECOND RED ARMY MAN: Look over there—where our Commander is.

MARUSIA: They're surrounding him . . . (*Shouts.*) Bashlykov! Bashlykov! Aha! One has stopped. But there are many of them! Run to the aid of the Commander with your hand grenades. Run.

SECOND RED ARMY MAN: I can't. We're done for.

MARUSIA: You rat. Give me the hand grenades. (*Pulls them away from him.*) Call up Vasia and tell him . . . (*Runs out with hand grenades. The RED ARMY MAN follows her with his eyes. Covers head*

with hands. Sinks down deep into the dugout. Noise gets louder. Machine guns rattle.)

MARUSIA (*from distance*): Vasia! Vasia! (*An explosion sounds, and then another, and still another.*)

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

Morning. Office of the Commander of the Front. Enter ADJUTANT. Places water-pitcher on table. Takes out pencils. Begins to sharpen them. KRIKUN, Special Correspondent, is seen through open door.

KRIKUN (*coming up to door*): Do you think the Commander will be in soon?

ADJUTANT: I don't know. He's spent the whole night at the Communications Center. From there he goes home to his apartment. A man has to have some sleep.

KRIKUN: But maybe he'll stop by here?

ADJUTANT: Anything is possible. Wait.

KRIKUN: What a pity! I'll have Moscow on the wire in half an hour. I'm sending my article on the heroic death of the Commander's son.

ADJUTANT: Well, send your story.

KRIKUN: The thing is, my article ends like this. Listen. (*Takes it out. Reads.*) "He died before my eyes, this wonderful youth. A worthy son of his father. Through the din of artillery cannonade I heard his hearty words: 'Tell my father I die calmly. I know he will wreak vengeance on the bloody reptiles for me.'" You understand—if I could only have a few lines from the father now! I've even jotted down a few already. (*Reads.*) "The old general sat with head lowered for a long while, when he heard of the death of his beloved son. Then he lifted his head. His eyes were dry. No, I did not see any tears in his eyes. They were burning with the sacred fire of revenge. He said in

a firm voice, 'Sleep my boy; sleep quietly and don't worry. I'll avenge you. I give you the oath of an old soldier.'" Do you understand what it would mean if I could send my article over now? Can you see what kind of article it would make? It would be a real scoop! What shall I do? Moscow will be on the wire any minute. How will it be if I get an okay on the text over the phone?

ADJUTANT: And how will you be able to see the Commander's eyes over the phone? You wrote so much about them.

KRIKUN: If I wrote only what I saw, I wouldn't be able to write every day. I wouldn't be so popular. My office demands stories every day. The readers are used to me. The paper can't come out without Krikun's story. All the papers envy our paper. They all told my editor he's a lucky man. "We'd be ready to give up all of our correspondents for your one Krikun."

ADJUTANT: Yes, you write a lot. I always read your stuff. You're pretty glib.

KRIKUN: What shall I do? How can I reach the Commander?

ADJUTANT: You can't call him.

KRIKUN (*looking at watch*): I'm late already. I'll have to send it as it is. I think the Commander won't object. What do you think? It's a pretty swell job—isn't it?

ADJUTANT: It's not so bad.

KRIKUN: Then I'm sending it off. My best regards. (*Exit. Enter* BLAGONRAVOV *and* UDIVITELNYI.)

BLAGONRAVOV: Hasn't he come yet?

ADJUTANT: Not yet.

BLAGONRAVOV: He phoned me he was on his way over here. (*Sits down. Exit* ADJUTANT.)

UDIVITELNYI: Just think. How could we have expected we'd ever lose our Tank Corps when all intelligence data showed that . . .

BLAGONRAVOV: Don't say that. What data are you talking about? We never really had any accurate information. That's what's caused us all our trouble.

UDIVITELNYI: From your words, we haven't even got an Intelligence Service.

BLAGONRAVOV: To speak frankly, it doesn't exist at our sector of the front. The advance units see what's on enemy territory only up to the first hillock. They mostly have to guess what's beyond that. If not for our aviation, we'd know nothing at all. And it's beyond the power of air-reconnaissance to do everything; besides, air-intelligence data need checking.

UDIVITELNYI: I don't agree with you. I'm even surprised. The reports I get ready for you every day for . . .

BLAGONRAVOV: I've decided not to read them. I've had enough. We've got to take serious measures or we'll both be put on trial. Real intelligence is 50 per cent responsible for our successes and sometimes 100 per cent. Only a fool does not understand that and we are blind. That's a disgrace.

UDIVITELNYI: That's a funny thing. So we're . . .

BLAGONRAVOV: Yes, that's right. Fools. I—because I work with you. You—from the day you were born.

UDIVITELNYI: Comrade Chief of Staff, the Commander is of a different opinion about me. He's known me for many years. I protest. I am an Order-bearer . . .

BLAGONRAVOV: I know what the Commander thinks of you. The fact that you are an Order-bearer is just a mistake.

UDIVITELNYI: Then in your opinion the government made a mistake in awarding me an Order.

BLAGONRAVOV: Yes, twice. First in making the award and secondly in not having recalled either your Order or mine for the way we've been working. It should have been done with a lot of noise, making it public through the press. (*Exit.*)

UDIVITELNYI (*taking out notebook and jotting down notes*): "The Government has made a mistake. The Government has made a mistake twice . . . Our intelligence is bad." What else did he say? Oh! Yes. (*Pause.*) Called me a fool. It's all very clear. We know these minds. They're typically defeatist. Wait—you've yet to see what kind of an intelligence officer I am. (*Picks up telephone receiver.*) Get me Ivanov, please. . . . Ivanov? . . . This is Udivitelnyi. When is the Party Bureau meeting? Today? . . . Very good. I have a question

we'll have to clear up. Listen, do you remember Blagonravov's questionnaire? . . . What's his family background? What's his origin? . . . Aha—son of a Church deacon. That makes it all clear. . . . Yes, that's all. . . . Yes . . . Yess . . . I'll be over. (*Puts down receiver. Enter Commander.*)

UDIVITELNYI: How are you, Comrade Commander?

GORLOV: Fine. There's a throbbing in my head. I didn't sleep all night.

UDIVITELNYI: You shouldn't do that, Comrade Commander. Your health is precious to the whole country.

GORLOV: I'm all right. What's that you have?

UDIVITELNYI: Here. (*Gives him paper.*)

GORLOV: All right. I'll read it later.

UDIVITELNYI: Ivan Ivanich, Blagonravov's in a bad state of mind.

GORLOV: What's the matter?

UDIVITELNYI: He's dissatisfied with everything and everybody. He's filled with defeatism. He says . . .

GORLOV (*interrupting*): Who cares? Know what kind of people they are? When a Commander is successful, they immediately attach themselves in order to share his fame. They strut around like cocks; they're awarded decorations. But as soon as something goes wrong, they hide in the bushes. They're afraid of responsibilities. I know their petty souls. And it all stems from one thing. They have no calluses on their hands. They haven't been steeled.

UDIVITELNYI: That's the truth. The holy truth. Take me, for instance. It's true I didn't work in a factory for a long time—only three years and two weeks. I don't understand myself how it is that it gave me enough proletarian feeling to last me for my whole life. But look at some other people. They're cultivated, they've been to universities—but when you look closer, somehow they're not what they should be. They just aren't.

GORLOV: Of course, on the surface they seem cultured, but inside they lack that earthiness. That's why they're not what they should be. (*Enter Chief of Staff. Exit UDIVITELNYI.*)

BLAGONRAVOV: Read this, please. (*Hands him a paper.*) If you have

no corrections, I'll have it put in code. There was a second call from Moscow. They demand details.

GORLOV (*reading*): Yes. All right. That's right. But this won't go. (*Makes a pencil mark.*)

BLAGONRAVOV (*looking*): Why not?

GORLOV: Have you just dropped from the clouds? Who is the Tank Corps Commander? An idiot, a fool. That's why he was defeated. This must be stated frankly.

BLAGONRAVOV: I still think . . .

GORLOV (*interrupting*): Just now I'm not interested in what you think. It will be as I want it. (*Reads on.*) Oh! And what new discovery is this? What's this? You're making Ognev into an Alexander of Macedonia and that old shoe of a Kolos into a General Suvorov.

BLAGONRAVOV: All that isn't in there. But they did carry out the operation brilliantly. Kolokol has been taken.

GORLOV: Who are they? Where do we come in? On whose orders did they act?

BLAGONRAVOV: As it happens, they acted contrary to your last plan, and according to their own, for which they had received Moscow's sanction.

GORLOV: They'll answer to me for that. That's what I called them here for. I shall not permit a slighting of the front-line Command. There's no reason for allowing youngsters to have their heads turned. Ognev is enough of a show-off as it is. He'll be completely spoiled after all of this. No. (*Crosses something out.*) Be so kind as to change all of this and have it back here in an hour.

BLAGONRAVOV: Comrade Commander, I'm sorry, but I cannot work with you any longer. (*Excitedly.*) I ask to be removed. I've come to this decision after—

GORLOV (*interrupting*): Hold on there. The boat isn't sinking yet and does not expect to sink. But you're running away like a rat. You can't get away with it, my friend. I'll take your pants off first, then your hide, and then, perhaps, I'll kick you out.

BLAGONRAVOV: Comrade Commander . . .

GORLOV: That's enough for you. Go and carry out my order.

BLAGONRAVOV: I—I—I—I cannot.

GORLOV: Stop stuttering, or you'll stutter the rest of your life. You know me. I don't know anything about psychology. (*Exit* BLAGONRAVOV. *Enter* ADJUTANT.)

ADJUTANT: Major-General Ognev and Major-General Kolos reporting according to orders.

GORLOV: Let them sit there and wait.

ADJUTANT: Yes, Comrade Commander. (*Exit.*)

GORLOV (*takes up phone*): Get me Khripun. Khripun? Come right over. We'll have lunch together. Cognac? Bring it along. (*Puts down receiver. Enter* MIRON GORLOV.)

MIRON: Hello, Ivan. I hear you spent the night at the Communications Center.

GORLOV: I did. Are you on your way?

MIRON: The plane is ready. I'm on my way to the airport. I can't wait for good weather any longer. I'll have to take a chance.

GORLOV: It looks a little better today.

MIRON: I'll make it somehow. I never thought our leavetaking would be so sad.

GORLOV: Yes, I loved Sergei. (*Long pause.*)

MIRON: He was radiant with youth. I simply can't imagine it. It's hard to believe . . .

GORLOV: What can we do? War is war.

MIRON: I understand, Ivan, how hard it must be for you . . . I don't know whether we shall meet soon again. And maybe . . . that's why I decided before leaving. . . . Please forgive me, I want to tell you a few bitter but true words. I must do it.

GORLOV: Well, go to it.

MIRON: Do you know what, my brother? We must not fool ourselves or the State. You don't know how to and you cannot command the front. It's too heavy a task for you to carry on your shoulders. Times have changed. In the Civil War you fought with almost no artillery, and the enemy didn't have much, either. You fought without aviation, without tanks, without any of the real equipment now in existence and which one should know as well as he knows his own

five fingers. . . . And you know very little, in fact, nothing at all. Give it up, yourself. You must understand we're building machines for the front day and night, the best machines in the world. And what for? For half to be wasted because of your slackness and ignorance. What can I tell the workers when I go back to the factory? The engineers who have not left their departments since the day war broke out? They're heroes. Just as much as the front-line soldiers are. I can't hide from them the fact that the fruits of their precious labor—our fine equipment—are being misused by you at the front. You must understand this, Ivan, before it is too late. Otherwise, you'll be removed.

GORLOV (*interrupting*): Hold on. (*Presses button. Enter ADJUTANT.*)

ADJUTANT: Yes, Comrade Commander.

GORLOV: This citizen is leaving for the airport now. See him to his car.

ADJUTANT: Yes, Comrade Commander. If you please. (*Long pause.*)

MIRON: Don't worry about me. I know my way around. You stay here with your Commander. I'm afraid he himself will have to be seen off soon. (*Exit.*)

ADJUTANT: Comrade Commander, if you please . . .

GORLOV: Yes?

ADJUTANT: Major-General Ognev asks that you see him immediately or make a definite appointment. He has to go in for a dressing.

GORLOV: What does he have to have bandaged? His noodle again?

ADJUTANT: No, his right arm.

GORLOV: Well, show them in.

ADJUTANT: Yes, Comrade Commander. (*Exit. Enter OGNEV and KOLOS in dress uniforms.*)

OGNEV: We are here on your orders. (*Pause.*)

GORLOV: I see that. Are you both cripples?

KOLOS: Only Major-General Ognev has been wounded. I'm in good health.

GORLOV: Why are you all dressed up today? (*To KOLOS.*) You look as if you spent the night curling your moustache. You think we'll

congratulate you. Make a banquet in your honor. No, my fine fellows, you are mistaken.

OGNEV: We knew you'd say that, Comrade Commander.

GORLOV: So?

KOLOS: We knew you would.

GORLOV: Well, my fine fellows, sit down; let's have a heart-to-heart talk. (OGNEV and KOLOS sit down.) With whom shall we start? Let's start with you, Ognev. You were given greater responsibility. You have much to answer for. Well? (Pause.) Why don't you talk?

OGNEV: I'm waiting for your questions.

GORLOV: What's there to wait for? Tell us why you didn't carry out the plan of operations.

OGNEV: We acted according to our own plan for which we had Moscow's permission. You are aware of that. Kolokol has been taken and the German units have been smashed. Our plan of operations proved correct.

GORLOV: In that case, what's my position here? Am I Commander of the Front or not? (OGNEV is silent.) Listen, Ognev, what are you up to? What do you want of me?

OGNEV: Just one thing. That you cease to command the front any longer.

GORLOV: So that's it. Is that what you want, too, my old friend?

KOLOS: It is.

GORLOV: Now, I understand you, my smarties. (Enter GAIDAR, Member of Military Council.) Hello, you arrived just in time.

GAIDAR: Hello. (Shakes hands with them.) I was held up in Moscow. (To OGNEV and KOLOS.) Glad to see you here. Congratulations on your wonderful victory.

GORLOV: Save your congratulations for later.

GAIDAR: Why?

GORLOV: Do you know what he's just said?

GAIDAR: What?

GORLOV: Say it again. Let the Member of the Military Council hear it. (Pause.) Ah! Your tail's between your legs now.

OGNEV: Comrade Member of the Military Council. I declare: We have no adequate Commander of the Front.

KOLOS: I agree.

GORLOV: Did you hear that? (*Long pause.*)

GAIDAR: Yes. (*To OGNEV and KOLOS.*) Step out for a few minutes, please.

OGNEV: Yes, Comrade Member of the Military Council. (*They go out.*)

GORLOV (*writing*): I'll show them. . . .

GAIDAR: What are you writing?

GORLOV: I'll be through soon; then you can read it and sign it. (*Writes.*) I'll put sense into their heads. They'll remember it for the rest of their lives. Here, sign it.

GAIDAR (*taking it and tearing it to pieces, then throwing pieces away, without reading it*): Comrade Gorlov, that's enough of your putting sense into other people's heads. It's time for you to take a rest from this heavy work. Read this decree from Moscow on your removal. (*Hands it to GORLOV. GORLOV reads. Long pause.*) You're a courageous man and you are devoted to our great cause. That's very good, and for that you are respected. But it's not enough for victory over the enemy. To attain victory it is necessary to know the modern means of warfare, to be able to learn from the experiences of modern warfare; it is necessary to nurture new and young leaders of war and not push them aside. Unfortunately, you are not capable of any of these things. Of course, a knowledge of military affairs and of the conduct of war is something one can master. If at present you do not have this knowledge, tomorrow you can, provided that there is a strong desire to learn, to learn from the experiences of war, to study and develop yourself. However, it is in precisely this desire that you are lacking. Is it possible for old military leaders to develop and become masters of modern warfare? Of course, it is. As well as if not better than the young ones, if only they are willing to profit from the experiences of modern warfare and not consider it beneath them to learn and develop further. It isn't for nothing that we have that wise folk saying: "As long as you live you can learn." But the trouble with some of

you old-timers is that you don't want to learn. You are sick with conceit and you think you are learned enough. This is your main shortcoming, Comrade Gorlov.

GORLOV (*rising and pausing*): Well! Well! Was it you who paved the way for my removal?

GAIDAR: Unfortunately not. I worked with you in a friendly way. I signed your papers. I stamped them. We argued at times. But, in general, I was not enough of a Party guide. I got it in the neck for that, so that I'll remember it for the rest of my life. It was coming to me.

GORLOV: Thank you for your frankness. Well—an order's an order. I'm a military man. I'm used to obeying. We'll see how you'll fight without me. (*Puts on hat and coat.*) You'll be sorry but it will be too late.

GAIDAR: Don't try to scare us. Bolsheviks don't get frightened so easily. We have no irreplaceable people. Many tried to scare us but they're all in the garbage heap of history. And the Party is as strong as steel. (*Pause.*)

GORLOV: To whom do I turn over the Command?

GAIDAR: You'll find out today. You'll be called in.

GORLOV: Yes, Comrade Member of the Military Council. (*Salutes. Exit through side door. The telephone rings. GAIDAR picks up the receiver.*)

GAIDAR: Hello. . . . What's that? Who are you? . . . Krikun? You're a special correspondent. . . . Just a minute. Was it you who panned our front-line newspaper for publishing that article on communications? . . . It was? . . . Then listen. You are talking with Member of the Military Council Gaidar. Get the Hell out of here, at once. If you are found anywhere along our front, you will have cause to screech as you never have in your life. (*Puts down phone. Enter Major-General KHRIPUN carrying a big bundle.*)

KHRIPUN: Greetings, Comrade Member of the Military Council. Has the Commander stepped out?

GAIDAR: He'll be right in. (*Presses button. Enter ADJUTANT.*)

ADJUTANT: Yes, Comrade Member of the Military Council.

GAIDAR: Ask Commander of the Front Major-General Ognev and Major-General Kolos to come in.

KHRIPUN: You meant General Gorlov. You made a mistake, didn't you?

GAIDAR: I made no mistake. Carry out your orders.

ADJUTANT: Yes, Comrade Member of the Military Council. (*Exit.*)

KHRIPUN: What's going on here? (*His bundle slips out of his hands. Noise of broken bottles.*)

GAIDAR (*going up to him*): What's this?

KHRIPUN: My cognac. What a pity the bottles broke! We could have drunk to the new Commander, couldn't we? Well, I have some more.

GAIDAR: Clean it up and clear out.

KHRIPUN: This very minute. This very minute. (*Picks up bundle and makes off. Enter OGNEV followed by KOLOS.*)

GAIDAR: I am very happy on behalf of Comrade Stalin to present you this order appointing you Commander of the Front. (*Hands order to OGNEV. OGNEV reads. KOLOS reads too.*)

OGNEV: How is this possible? I'm so young . . .

GAIDAR: Stalin says that it's necessary to advance young, talented military commanders to leading positions, to work together with the older men to conduct war along modern lines and not in the old-fashioned way. We need young men who will learn from the experience of the present war and will grow and develop.

KOLOS: Volodia, my dear friend . . . Pardon me. (*Straightens up.*) Comrade Commander of the Front, look at me, an old man and see how correct that is. (*Embraces and kisses OGNEV.*)

CURTAIN